

POETRY
A MAGAZINE OF VERSE
VOLUME LVII

Poetry

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE.

FOUNDED IN 1912 BY
HARRIET MONROE



VOLUME LVIII
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~~E~~R R A T A :

- Page 155: Insert row of dots after 3rd and 7th lines of first quotation
Page 221, line 8: For *cosmage* read *comages*.
Page 225, line 23 Delete *change to*.
Page 232, line 22 For *Collected* read *Selected*
Page 237, 3rd line from bottom of page For *dead* read *decd*
Page 276, 2nd and 3rd lines from bottom of page For *Sister Siella Maris*
read *Sister Maris Siella*
Page 281, lines 13 and 14 For *Company* read *System*.

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To have great poets
there must be great audiences too.

W H I T M A N

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To these guarantors and all others who are supporting the magazine and helping to finance its prizes, the editors would express their cordial thanks and the gratitude of the poets.

The death of Charles H. Hamill, the distinguished lawyer, which occurred August 8th in Chicago, deprives this magazine of one of its oldest friends and is a sad loss to the cultural life of his community. Mr. Hamill headed the Chicago symphony orchestra board for many years and had served as chairman of our Administrative Committee since the magazine was founded. He was also one of the first to sign his name to our list of guarantors. At the time of Harriet Monroe's death, his efforts were a deciding factor in enabling POETRY to continue.

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LVIII

NO. I

Canadian Number

Edited by E. K. Brown

To

J O H N W . D A F O E

Editor-in-chief of the *Winnipeg Free Press*
Architect of the Canadian Future

APRIL 1941

T W O P O E M S

THE INVADED FIELD

THEY brought their youth up on the lore
Of the Phoenix and the pyre,
Of birth from death and gold from fire
And the myth of the Aryan spore.

They measured life in metric tons,
Assessed both man and beast,
And with their patriot sweat they greased
The breechlocks of their guns.

They took their parables from mud—
How pure the crocus grows!
See how the fragrance of a rose
May spring from buried blood!

So, on the promise of this yield
The youth swung down the road,
Goose-stepping to their songs, and sowed
Their bodies on the field.

. . . .

Now if a brier should here be born
In some ironic hour,
Let life infect both leaf and flower
But death preserve the thorn.

COME AWAY DEATH

Willy nilly, he comes or goes, with the clown's logic,
Comic in epitaph, tragic in epithalamium,
And unseduced by any mused rhyme.
However blow the winds over the pollen,
Whatever the course of the garden variables,
He remains the constant,
Ever flowering from the poppy seeds.

There was a time he came in formal dress,
Announced by Silence tapping at the panels
In deep apology.

A touch of chivalry in his approach,
He offered sacramental wine,
And with acanthus leaf
And petals of the hyacinth
He took the fever from the temples
And closed the eyelids,
Then led the way to his cool longitudes
In the dignity of the candles.

His mediaeval grace is gone—
Gone with the flame of the capitals
And the leisured turn of the thumb
Leafing the manuscripts,
Gone with the marbles
And the Venetian mosaics,
With the bend of the knee
Before the rose-strewn feet of the Virgin.
The *paternosters* of his priests,
Committing clay to clay,
Have rattled in their throats
Under the gride of his traction tread.

One night we heard his footfall—one September night—
In the outskirts of a village near the sea.
There was a moment when the storm
Delayed its fist, when the surf fell
Like velvet on the rocks—a moment only;
The strangest lull we ever knew!
A sudden truce among the oaks
Released their fratricidal arms;

The poplars straightened to attention
As the winds stopped to listen
To the sound of a motor drone—
And then the drone was still.
We heard the tick-tock on the shelf,
And the leak of valves in our hearts
A calm condensed and lidded
As at the core of a cyclone ended breathing.
This was the monologue of Silence
Grave and unequivocal.

What followed was a bolt
Outside the range and target of the thunder,
And human speech curved back upon itself
Through Druid runways and the Piltdown scarps,
Beyond the stammers of the Java caves,
To find its origins in hieroglyphs
On mouths and eyes and cheeks
Etched by a foreign stylus never used
On the outmoded page of the Apocalypse.

E. J. Pratt

POWER

The wave plunges and the sea-birds cry,
Power is in the ocean and the sky.
The wind-driven tide
That would come whispering on still days
With a long ripple breaking in a sigh,
Now crashes down;
The wind-blown gulls
That stood in tranquil days
Like metal birds fixed on the lobster-floats,
Mirrored gray-silver in the glass tide,
Rush with the gale and, when they turn,
Struggle upright, tossed again back.

Heart that, once as still as they,
Idled with an unmeaning sigh,
Or gazed at bygone days in memory's glass,
Now with hard passion buffeted,
Beats up against the gale,
Or crashes on the shattered glass of memory,
And cries that there is power in destiny
As well as in the ocean and the sky.

Duncan Campbell Scott

THE PSALTER OF A. M. KLEIN

PSALM 151

From pastures green, whereon I lie,
Beside still waters, far from crowds,
I lift hosannas to the sky
And hallelujahs to the clouds,

Only to see where clouds should sit
And in that space the sky should fill
The fierce carnivorous Messerschmitt,
The Heinkel on the kill.

They'll not be green for very long
Those pastures of my peace, nor will
The heavens be a place for song,
Nor the still waters still.

PSALM 154

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim, A Song of Loves

Well may they thank thee, Lord, for drink and food:
For daily benison of meat,
For fish or fowl,
For spices of the subtle cook,
For fruit of the orchard, root of the meadow, berry of the wood;
For all things good,
And for the grace of water of the running brook!
Yea, in the hallelujah of these joys
Not least is my uplifted voice.

But this day into thy great temple have I come
To praise thee for the poisons thou hast brayed,
To thank thee for pollens venomous, the fatal gum,
The banes that bless, the multifarious herbs arrayed
In all the potency of that first week
Thou didst compose the sextet of Earth spoken, made!

Behold them everywhere, the unuttered syllables of thy breath,
Heavy with life, and big with death!
The flowering codicils to thy great fiat!
The hemp of India—and paradise!
The monkshood, cooling against fever;
And nightshade: death unpetalled before widened eyes;
And blossom of the heart, the purple foxglove!
The spotted hemlock, punishment and prize,
And those exhilarators of the brain,—
Cocaine;
Blood of the grape; and marrow of the grain!

And sweet white flower of thy breath, O Lord,
Juice of the poppy, conjuror of timeless twilights,
Eternities of peace in which the fretful world
Like a tame tiger at the feet lies curled.

PSALM 155

*To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of Abraham; when one sent,
and they watched the house to kill him*

When I in prayer beseech thy benison,
Many are they thy favours I could seek:
A long and worthy life for my only son,

A happy hearth for my wife, and for my mother
Health, and untroubled waiting in the sun,
(A golden crown in Eden for my father!)
And for my several kin, I could also speak,
Of this one's need, desire of that one,
And ask for each of thy abundant grace—
Save that today I ask no blessings, no,
I am but one of many almoners
Who ask for him thy devastating curse!

May his flesh fall from him, and may he, living, rot
Until he is not sure he is, or he is not.
May he be flung from fever into an icy cold
And may his days be long for him, but he not old.
May strange diseases take him, doctors come
From far-off lands to twitter over him,
Matter-of-factly, without pity,
As over a strange new scum.
O may his brain be peopled by grim ghosts,
And may he wake from sleep, in sweaty fear,
Fearing four murderers at the four bed posts!
And after a fortnight of convulsions may he finally die,
And be remembered, if remembered at all,
In the name of some newly found, particularly disgusting fly,
Or in the writing on a privy wall.

A. M. Klein

T H R E E P O E M S

SURREALISM IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST

Twisted Cross stands almost erect
With a smile on his well-turned corners
Inserting avuncular punctuation
In an immaculate maidenhead
Responding in the hollow church.

Subdiaconal Fissure
Doffs a couple of maces and a tennis net,
Descending from the cabbage
To the terror made of fonts.

Collars are worn reversed across the privates
Or screwed to the navel with scallops of crepe:
You ought to see Judas in samite!

Anyway, they stoned the roll away,
And what do you think?
Only two storm troopers had the right time:
 Three merry widows in three
 Quarter time
 For you and
 Time for me and
 Three heil Marys on St. Stephansplatz.

Rubber Stocking came in with a lilt
And a penetrating skewer

And the headsman in black.

The controlled press agreed that she died rather well.

The Angelic Doctor, on the contrary,
Shows, that having no form,
And, consequently, no life,
Neither had she, therefore, any death,
Either good, bad, or indifferent.

Likewise also Twisted Cross, Immaculate Maidenhead,
Subdiaconal Fissure, Judas in Samite, Storm Troopers
A and B, Agnes, Mabel, Becky, Three-Quarter Time,
Penetrating Skewer, and the Hangman in Black
In Limbo only
Unlive and undie: God is not mocked.

THE MERMAID

Dark green and seaweed-cold, the snake-bright hair
Streams on the golden-sun-illuminated wave
That sways as gently as two bells the grave
Small coral-tinted breasts to starboard there
Where salt translucency's green branches bear
This sea-rose, a lost mermaid, whose cold cave,
Left lightless now, the lapping seatides lave
At base of Okeanos' twisted stair.

She's come where bubbles burst, crisp silver skims;
Where the tall sun stands naked; where he shines;
Where live men walk the shrouds with fork-like limbs.

She smiles: and the head of the shipmite swims;
But the bo'sun bawls for the grappling lines,
And the Chaplain fumbles in his book of hymns.

THE CRY

We have come a long way riding! Is it this
Granite overgrown on no sweet-smelling vale
Only to gain? No more? O look how pale
His heart is, blue his lips! Ah, this it is
—White for his ruthless love, see, Maryblue
For his heart's lips' cloudless song—that shall prevail:
So have the Fathers writ; this is no tale
Of worldly flies stuck in a kiss's glue.

A tired boy, at midnight probing a sore,
Sobs, lifting the word from a touched lung.
Where are the flashing limbs? They bloom no more.
Only the thin dust stiffens the pricking tongue.
He cries out: *Jesus, show me thy grass, thy green,*
Else how shall I keep this thing I have not seen!

A. J. M. Smith

T W O P O E M S

I

When I see the falling bombs
Then I see defended homes.
Men above and men below
Die to save the good they know.

Through the wrong the bullets prove
Shows the bravery of love.
Pro and con have single stem
Half a truth dividing them.

Between the dagger and the breast
The bond is stronger than the beast.
Prison, ghetto, flag and gun
Mark the craving for the One.

Persecution's cruel mouth
Shows a twisted love of truth.
Deeper than the rack and rope
Lies the double human hope.

My good, your good, good we seek
Though we turn no other cheek.
He who slays and he who's slain
Like in purpose, like in pain.

Who shall bend to single plan
The narrow sacrifice of man?
Find the central human urge
To make a thousand roads converge?

II

From those condemned to labour
For profit of another
We take our new endeavour.

For sect and class and pattern
Through whom the strata harden
We sharpen now the weapon.

Till power is brought to pooling
And masses share in ruling
There will not be an ending
Nor any peace for spending.

F. R. Scott

FIVE POEMS

TIME THAT WEARS GRANITE THIN

Time that wears granite thin, and sucks
Staunch iron back to rust,
And circumvents the work of hands
And annotates our lust,
Shall put its sickness on this bone,
And crystallize the vein,
And blunt the pulse, and halt the gait,
And winnow out the pain.

What form your beauty shall assume,
Transmuted like the rock
By time's alchemic enterprise
With neither roil nor shock,
Will not concern the ebbing heart
That slows its motion down,
Nor urge distress upon the soul
To note its vesture gone.

And yet my heart demurs the change,
Makes outcry against time,
That this dark head I so much love
Shall perish out of mind;
That your slight hands and narrow breast,
These thews so sweetly knit,
Shall fumble back to lime and salt,
And none shall question it.

Out of this passion and these fears
We make an ecstasy
Shall sing defiance from the grass
When we have ceased to be,
Shall name your beauty on a page,
And praise your careful talk,
And plait a legend from your hair,
And memorize your walk.

THREE SONNETS IN SEQUENCE

Fall Horoscope

(the meeting)

What twist conspired our meeting, ushered in
Magnetic hunger of the lip for lip,
Hand's reach to hand, blood's tremolo to thin
Blue vein in cheek, mind's urgency to strip
Conceit from bone and find the marrow sweet;
What mechanism's gear and counterpoise
Sprung to its function in an instant's heat,
As eye confronted eye, ear heeded voice?

The year, the season, or the day, perhaps,
The rootward pull of sap, the tawny drift
Of leaves in spiral at the fall's relapse,
The hint of frost to come and bind and rift:
It does not matter what the reason was,
Considering how and when it came to pass.

Afternoon of the Damned

(the jealousy)

This petulance implicit in the flesh,
This eager contour native to the bone
Perils the plot, the sequence planned, the mesh
Of guile contrived to liquidate the bane;
Passionate frailty turns the hazard loose,
And strays the purpose, urges wildly on
The baited tiger in the vein, obtuse
With hate, with fury hurling logic down.

Recalled, refractory, the willful I
Mimics the motion of a sober rule;
Is placid, dutiful, with downcast eye
Like any hypocritic child at school:
Then breaks its pandemonium on the air,
That you are equally as false as fair!

Winter Solstice

(the parting)

I think that in another time and place
We might have loved, who briefly kiss and go
Our private journeys with a similar woe:
You wear a singular and stony face,
And I, to patience never quite resigned,
Cry malediction on the hour that brought
Two souls together with no loving thought,
And speech from no to yes not more than kind..

This frosty season when no leaf puts out,
No root fulfills its need, nor blossoms show,
(And tubers snug in gravel do not grow)
Defines the time when love endures its rout:
This wan desire connotes the wintry lag
When sparks no ember out of ash and slag.

END OF EPOS

Thus love that grit between the teeth
Grows smooth as pebble to the hand:
The heart that with small tumult beat
Is staid as marble in the end.

Leo Kennedy

THERE WAS A BRIDGE

There was a bridge of smooth moss-slippery stone
across the creek; and on the other side
green bog-moss laid an oozing rug;
and there in the deep shade
blue monkshood stood.

This was another country, and we crossed
its borders cautiously, because the moss
was greener there and wind-bent alders threw
strange darting shadows and the monkshood grew
too blue.

Floris Clark McLaren

FOUR POEMS

SCROLL-SECTION

You who practise the four elegant occupations
tea music calligraphy and checkers
follow me over the snow in search of plum blossom.

Leave kingdom breakers
to juggle nations,
and care's broad
cloud
to the white hare that with mortar and pestle
sits in the moon by the cassia tree,
leave your lacquer trestle
of puppets, your aviary
of pets in petrified wood,
your malachite lion with its ball of brocade,
your clique to scribble the past
on dust,
and with no inlaid saddle,
no jewelled bridle,
follow me over the snow in search of plum blossom.

The leaping salmon rainbows the cataracts,
the dragon in chase of a pearl skips space
and the phoenix, alighting, first selects a place
to arrange its tail. Emulate in a degree these agreeable acts.

Silent though peach and plum
a path is trod to them.
Every rustic talent
till seen is silent.

Even the hollow bamboo
has leaves that droop.

Come back over the snow,
set up
wrist-rests, paint in ink
mountains trees creepers clouds
gorges rivers cascades
the brink
of wind, monasteries in mist,
beauties that have no best,
that through your purpose a longing be learned, earned,
the seal of your mind borrowed and not returned.

WORDS

There are words that can only be said on paper.
It is fortunate they are few. All others shrink
On paper to the thinness of dried ink
And fade at the mind into forgotten vapour.

There are words that can only be said once
And have all been said before that fact is plain.
In a sense no word can ever be said again
And none can be said again in the same sense.

There are words that have to be said or written,
Answers and questions, times to be observed,
But most words die in a cause they have not served
Or bite forever what never should be bitten.

And then there are the words that are left unsaid
And the undetectable words used in their stead.

BEING REMEMBERED

All that counts they say is being remembered,
But remembrance stretches from love remembers all
To the penny post-card for which there was no call
Remembrance is a lottery of numbered

Slips where the numbers rarely correspond
With the prize your heart is bet on there are prizes
That look that way till won, there are surprises
That look that way until you look beyond.

Perhaps some heart recalls you every minute,
Or a silent journal tells you off at night,
Out of mind is not always out of sight,
And a frame on a wall may have your photo in it.

Anyhow being remembered is all that counts
The pounding hours and the prone-falls between rounds.

THE FORMULA

I understand, they say, *I understand*.
They have read books and studied human nature,
And they are sure experience was their teacher,
And tell you so and clasp you by the hand.

They are afraid. Some silence can be heard
Until a formula has barred it off.
I understand is the infallible stuff
To cancel every feared unspoken word.

They do not understand For if they did
There would be two instead of one adrift.
To understand is to have shared the shrift,
To have won or lost with someone, side by side,

And all the understanding on the earth
Can never light a fire on a cold hearth.

Robert Finch

ANSWER

Hungry unnumbered since the birth of time
Question the dusty sky
In vain: no answer there.

Gone, gone, as darkness floods the day,
Fled, sped, unsatisfied—
Ashes to ashes; dust to dust.

(The scabbard falls, yet the bright sword
Guardian no longer
Speeds, speeds to the Horseman's hand.)

Still time arrogant, invincible, is armed with death;
Still the unregarding worlds roll on;
The universe expands—is dumb.

With no stone hunger be fed, but quickening bread
When tall-sceptered time at last
Is whipped, stripped, done and dead.

Mary Elizabeth Colman

T W O P O E M S

STUDY IN FRAGILITY

The Private View—that exclusive function—
No privacy and no view!
I watched them enter together.
She—in a white lace gown, with her shining hair—
Her eyes remind me always of two black panthers.
He—with his weary mariner's gaze sea-blue and so piercing.
They seemed walking together upon Eternity's desert,
With the shifting sand of convention drifting over
Her small satin slippers,
And the winds of scandal blowing that dry dust abroad
In tall spirals.
Such a picture in black and white!
Protector—Protected!
Then we met, and she said to me lightly,
"Have you seen the Camel? No? It's the thing of the show.
It is done so greatly. It's a still life—
'Shell Flowers with Camel'—I think—Where's our Catalogue?
The Camel is porcelain and quite devastated—So sad!
Unbroken you know but anaemic and hopeless,
Leaning up exhausted against a most masterly jar—
Such divine primrose yellow! And the shell flowers!
You never saw such a spray of shell flowers—
Utter smugness! Oh the whole thing's perfection!"
"But," I said, "My dear Child! Story pictures! Today? In art?
Ideas that are logical? Anathema!"

She smiled and waited for him to answer, watching him.
In her eyes was the confident faith of some blessed child angel
Watching, expectant. She waited!
"Now God," I said to myself, "What have you let happen?"
Dust swirled about her. He said, "Why not ideas?
Why not sentiments even, with such painting as that?
Come and look at it!"
We moved across to the opposite wall, there we stood,
And we stared
 At the Camel,
 the shell flowers,
 the masterly yellow jar,
 the enchanting grey curtain.
We talked of them. He said, absently,
"Grey means negation and question"—
He lowered his eyes to the dust that swirled
Past her ankles. Then I knew.
I had found two standing in time and in space
Where there is no negation nor question.
A wind passed over the picture. I swear my hair lifted!
And faintly, from far far away, those shell flowers
Tinkled
As if they were shattered,
In a very deep silence.

HOOR

Tea things of gleaming silver, porcelain,
Green curdled like unfolding leaves of Spring,
The rust-red honey jar—long treasured shapes
In vases, fabrics, leather, copper, wood—
With Spirit brooding cloud-like over all.
Fire burned. Symphony poured from radio.
Melodies stole, above deep throbbing drums,
From heaven-tuned strings, from wood-winds on a hill
Seas thundered—far resounding murmurs caught
In great brown mists of power through golden horns

Then, when our beating hearts might bear no more,
That small blue cadence, mystic and aloof,
Soothing, elusive as June morning's dew.
And the fire followed it! A small blue flame
Floated and burned above illumined caves
In the firm lichened logs, laid parallel
And singing through their voiceless fervent glow.
Great allies these—the music and the fire!
O lovely hour of mine, with chords unknown—
"I will not let thee go except thou bless . . ."

Louise Morey Bowman

T W O P O E M S

POLYPHEMUS MADDEN'D

. Looked up, to see
Showering fountain-stars in the soft-piled night
Close curved above him in a low familiar dome
Over the upturned faces of quiet folk and pale flowers,
Showering with a faint hiss and a silvery patter
Into the shining level of the mist-sea'd lowland
Lipping against the sheer-down mountain edge below him.

Thought of broad day blazing on blue jewelled water
On the sharp sea breaking to million wingy arrow-heads
Into a shifting spilling glitter sparkling and spattering hastily.
Slowly rose, not a stone's throw out from the shore,
Galatea alone, with cool disdainful arms.
On her smooth, still body the bitter sea fawning,
Pressing along her slender length with hurried caresses insatiable
Drifted her heavy hair, and danced in the tresses' ends.
So she rose, and lay along on the winking water,
Looked to the land, and the long blue hills, and the silly shaggy
monster sighing,
Saw him unseeing, with so great disdain,
She would not even turn her eyes away.

Slowly fades the sun and the mocking ocean; only
The black rock about, and the misty valley under him,
Only and always above the slow smoke sliding
Steadily out of the hill far overhead to the northward, only
In a level line far to the north the gray smoke trailing.

AUBADE

Sleep on, my love, nor rouse to see
The dawn's abhorrent pageantry,
The shame that never should be seen,
How the chill East in glassy green
Has drowned the little friendly stars,
And the bright comely stature mars
Of tall Orion and the Bull.
But little pallid flecks of wool
Stand bleakly, waiting for the day
That slowly drags his lagging way
Out of yon sodden rumpled bed,
Lifting a blear and haggard head
From coverlets of sullen red
And musty purple, dully spread.
The trees are dark and stiff and still,
And all along the carven hill
No living sound, only the spill
Of a spring trickling, small and chill.
This is the awful death of Dawn.
Heed it not, love! sleep on! sleep on!

L. A. MacKay

T W O P O E M S

PRAIRIE GRAVEYARD

Wind mutters thinly on the sagging wire
binding the graveyard from the gouged dirt road,
bends thick-bristled Russian thistle,
sifts listless dust
into cracks in hard grey ground.
Empty prairie slides away
on all sides, rushes toward a wide
expressionless horizon, joined
to a vast blank sky.

Lots near the road are the most expensive
where heavy tombstones lurch a fraction
tipped by splitting soil.
Farther, a row of aimless heaps
names weather-worn from tumbled sticks
remember now the six thin children
of a thin, shiftless home.

Hawk, wind-scouring, cuts
a pointed shadow on the drab scant grass.

Two graves apart by the far fence
are suicides, one with a grand
defiant tombstone, bruising at the heart
"Death is swallowed up in victory."
(And may be, God's kindness being more large
than man's, to this, who after seven years

of drought, burned down his barn,
himself hanged in it)
The second, nameless, set around
with even care-sought stones
(no stones on this section)
topped with two plants, hard-dried,
in rust-thick jam tins set in the caked pile.

A gopher jumps from a round cave,
sprints furtively, spurts under fence, is gone.
Wind raises dead curls of dust and whines
under its harsh breath on the limp dragged wires,
then leaves the graveyard stiff with silence, lone
in the centre of the huge lone land and sky.

TRAFFIC LIGHT

Steel-tipped whistle bores a jagged hole
through this hard square of noise—the intersection's
gargle, hammer, scream of clanging traffic.
A harsh round rose,
the red light bursts to bloom.

Now you must halt,
you the young man,
one foot off the sidewalk
body pulled elastic
taut to spring,
halting, consider
in this small moment
where are you going?

Why are you hurried?
And you, the old woman,
spread feet in tipped-over shoes,
easing the dragging bag's
threading black handle,
you the full-chinned manager,
smooth round face and overcoat,
you the waitress
blank-eyed between mascara,
run out from the cafe
sweater on your blue smock,
you the soldier,
you the old Chinaman,
you the parson
who should know the answer
for all who enquire it—
all of you, grouping
like flotsam on water,
thrusting, impatient,
why are you hurried,
where are you going
here and hereafter?

The whistle blows cruel travesty of pipes
heard in soft afternoons,
the light turns blaring green
of flowerless, cold synthetic spring.
People run, trot, trundle to the other kerb
not knowing the question has been asked, nor which
can give the answer when it is required.

Anne Marriott

T W O P O E M S

LORCA

For Federico Garcia Lorca, 20th Century Spanish poet shot by Franco

When veins congeal
And gesture is confounded
When pucker frowns no more
And voice's door
Is shut forever

On such a night
My bed will shrink
To single size
Sheets go cold
The heart hammer
With life-loud clamor
While someone covers up the eyes.

Ears are given
To hear the silence driven in
Nailed down.
And we descend now down from heaven
Into earth's mould, down.

*While you—
You hold the light
Unbroken.*

When you lived

Day shone from your face
Now the sun rays search
And find no answering torch.

If you were living now
This cliffside tree
With its embracing bough
Would speak to me.

If you were speaking now
The waves below
Would be the organ stops
For breath to blow.

And if your rigid head
Flung back its hair
Gulls in a sickle flight
Would circle there.

*You make the flight
Unshaken.*

You are alive!
O grass flash emerald sight
Dash of dog for ball
And skipping rope's bright blink
Lashing the light!

High in cloud
The sunset fruits are basketed

And fountains curl their plumes
On statue stone.
In secret thicket mould
Lovers defend their hold
Old couples hearing whisperings
Touch in a handclasp, quivering.

For you sang out aloud
Arching the silent wood
To stretch itself, tiptoe,
Above the crowd . . .

*You hold the word
Unspoken.*

You breathe. You be!
Bare, stripped light
Time's fragment flagged
Against the dark.

You dance. Explode
Unchallenged through the door
As bullets burst
Long deaths ago, your breast.

And song outsoars
The bomber's range
Serene with wind-
Maneuvered cloud.

*Light flight and word
The unassailed, the token!*

NOCTURNE

Out of the turmoil mustered up by day
We may not free our hands, nor turn our heads to pray—
So tight the knot our sunlight ties.

So firm the hold of voices, thoughts are drowned
The river's chant is lost, in splintering gunshot sound:
Or from its song the essence dies.

Brightness was all, when earth lay primitive
Fair to the hands' fresh touch, ready to burst and live:
Now in her womb corrosion lies.

Therefore we search alone the shuttered dark
Where faces of the dead shine luminous, a spark
Of lightning from encircled skies.

Therefore we seek the peace of broken ground
After the wars have buried all the young, and found
Dark remedy for shining eyes . . .

Therefore we hide our faces; make no sound.

Dorothy Livesay

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POETRY IN CANADA, 1880-1940

THERE IS a Canadian literature, sometimes rising to effects of great beauty, but it has stirred little interest outside Canada. A few of our writers have made for themselves large and even enthusiastic audiences in Britain and the United States a century ago the works of Thomas Chandler Haliburton were widely read on both sides of the Atlantic, and his Connecticut watch-maker Sam Slick has left a perceptible stamp on American humour; at the close of the last century and the beginning of this C. G. D. Roberts's tales of animal life extended the range of North American prose writing in a direction acclaimed by critics and common readers alike; more recently the *Jalna* chronicles of Mazo De La Roche, the short stories and novels of Morley Callaghan, and the humorous sketches of Stephen Leacock, have acquired for their authors both in Britain and the United States settled reputations of distinction. Still, to the reader outside Canada such works as I have mentioned have not been read as reflections of phases in a national culture: the interest in the work has not in any degree spread to become an interest in the traditions and movements in the national life from which it emerged.

Even within the national borders the impact of Canadian literature has been relatively superficial. The almost feverish concern with its growth on the part of a small minority is no substitute for eager general sympathy or excitement. To one who takes careful account of the difficulties which have steadily beset its growth, its survival as something interesting and vital seems a miracle.

Some of these difficulties, those of an economic kind; can be

simply and briefly stated. A Canadian publisher must remain primarily an agent for British and American houses, making of his Canadian books a sideline in which he is rather more likely to lose money than to make it. A Canadian reader, unless he lives in a large city not far from Toronto or Montreal, cannot find in a local bookstore a large range of books: unless a book is almost certain to sell, the cost of shipping across the vast distances in this sparsely populated country dissuades the retailer from placing an order. The distribution through Canadian publishers of British and American books by authors of proved readability and importance makes it hazardous for a Canadian author to depend wholly or mainly on the domestic market if he lives by his pen. About one third of the population, from the time of our Confederation in 1867 to the present, has spoken the French language, read little in any other (except for a small minority that studies the classics), and developed scarcely any curiosity about the culture of English-speaking Canada. These are disagreeably hard and apparently unchanging facts: they indicate how insecure is the economic basis of a Canadian literature.

Other difficulties, of a psychological kind, cannot be stated so briefly. Among these the chief is Canadian colonialism. Constitutionally Canada is not a colony: by a series of enactments since the beginning of the First World War Canada has risen to a status of parity with Britain. Emotionally, however, much of the colonial posture of earlier times endures. The overwhelming majority of Canadians (always excepting those who speak the French language) do not readily believe that in religion, in philosophy, or in the arts, great originality or power is at all likely to develop at home. The imprint of a

London publisher or of a British university press is a sounder guarantee of a book or an author than any Canadian sponsorship, even a Governor-General's. Of late Canadians have also looked with profound, if often unconfessed, respect, to New York: a Canadian book published or eulogized there will sell more rapidly than if it had had merely local support. The slight decline in the warmth of our colonial feeling towards Britain has been matched by an at least equal rise in our feeling of cultural colonialism towards the United States.

Another psychological factor of intense power is the survival in the national character of qualities which in our pioneer past have been tried and found precious. No nation is more practical than ours: admiration is readily stirred, even more readily than south of the border, by the deft surgeon or the smoothly running factory. On the other hand the parents of the boy who would be a sculptor or the girl who would write short stories are profoundly disturbed: such activities do not seem wholly natural, do not seem to deserve the whole energy of a life, seem to put their victim in an insecure niche in the margin of the national pattern. The preoccupation in all the contemporary arts with elaborate techniques, fierce or airy criticism, and abnormal psychology, intensifies the disturbance, which would exist in strength even if the artist were as straightforward as Burns or Dickens, both of whom are Canadian idols. Art should be for leisure only—the aesthetic life is not a recognized form of the good life.

Nor, a third factor, is Canada an integrated whole. Regional identities and loyalties are strong. There is little eagerness to read books or look at pictures which present distant parts of the country. I do not believe that a typical Toronto or Ottawa

reader would select a novel dealing with the wheat farms of Saskatchewan or the fishing villages of Nova Scotia in preference to one about a strike in Chicago or a religious revival in Wales.

Canadian literature has come into existence without any real impulse from the national life. It has been the succession of achievements of a small number of gifted and ardent men, most of them heavily engaged in the professions, the universities, and the civil service, and giving to letters the first place in their love but only the second in their strength. It is to be expected that such a literature will have limitations, unless, as has not happened in Canada, the irresistible power of "genius" shows itself. It will not often deal powerfully with the great conflicts between classes, or dramatically with the mainsprings of individual action. In general it will not be notable in originality or breadth. Often, however, it may show a high degree of technical expertness, pure taste, fine scholarship, clarity of emotion, charm of reverie.

Moreover, on the side of hope and faith, it must be said that the future of Canada is almost singularly incalculable: none of the factors, for instance, that now tell so strongly against the growth of a national literature and culture is eternal, and many of them are certain to diminish in strength. It was undoubtedly a piece of unguarded optimism when Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the greatest of all Canadians and Prime Minister of the Dominion from 1896 to 1911, asserted that if the nineteenth century was America's, the twentieth would be Canada's. But nineteenth century America and twentieth century Canada have in common at least the unpredictableness of their evolution, and the plasticity of their character, society, and culture. Every reflective Canadian must feel a mixture of disturbance and delight in the

inability to foresee even the main stresses in the Canada of the future. A literature which began in dream, which has gone on to relatively isolated experiments, may end in—what? Epic national myth? In the direction of this the greatest of our poets is now moving. Veritist regionalism? This is the tenor of our most scrupulous novelist. The future cannot be charted, even roughly.

II

Our poetry has had two flowerings. The first began in 1880, with the appearance of Charles G. D. Roberts's collection *Orion and Other Poems*, and began to fade soon after the turn of the century. Roberts was one of four men born between 1860 and 1862 whose works were the chief performances in our first distinguished period. The others were Bliss Carman, a cousin of Roberts, who announced himself in 1893 with *Low Tide on Grand Pré*; Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott, civil servants in Ottawa and close friends, whose first collections, *Among the Millet* and *The Magic House and Other Poems*, appeared in 1888 and 1893 respectively. Lampman died at the peak of his power in 1899, Carman died worn out thirty years later, Roberts and Scott are still writing vigorous poetry.

Nature has been the central theme of all these poets. Roberts and Carman, born in New Brunswick, early came under the spell of the transcendentalist movement in adjoining New England. Carman, who studied philosophy at Harvard and lived much in the United States, ran the gamut from an Emersonian stress on the over-soul to an imagist's delight in minute phenomena. Much of his poetry has its worth in an authentic if

rather slight emotion about Nature the Mother, and Nature the garment of Spirit. Roberts has been less philosophic, and more robust: much of his poetry reminds one that he is the author of a long and original series of sketches of life in the wilds. Scott, whose career has led him from a third-class clerkship in the federal department of Indian Affairs to its headship, fuses with a Wordsworthian attitude to nature a fine awareness of the past civilization of those whom in his active hours he has done so much to aid. Lampman, by far the most pictorial of these poets, has set down in clear images the swift rivers, the mild hills, and the snow-bound fields of the Ottawa region.

A vehement reaction against the poetry of this group set in at the end of the First World War; and in the radical journals of opinion they were punctually insulted as the "maple tree school." The bitter vengefulness with which they were pursued by the generation of their grandchildren is at first impossible to understand. Any one could see that these four men brought to poetry a high concern with craftsmanship, an insistence on genuineness of feeling, a modesty of aim, and a wise conviction, not shared when they began to write by the majority of their English-speaking compatriots, that the development of a distinctive Canadian consciousness of life was underway.

In them the younger poets and critics chiefly disliked two things. The elder poets had dealt rather flaccidly with individual human character. Surprisingly little of their work is dramatic or psychological. When they abandoned nature it was to meditate with tranquility on the general nature of life or to deal in hortatory fashion with political movements. In none of them can one find anything in the manner of Frost's *Death of the Hired Man* or of Robinson's *Tasker Norcross*. What the younger

writers did not sufficiently remember was that even in fiction and in biography Canadian letters had failed to deal firmly and vividly with character. The second objection was against the form of the elder poets. To read what was written about it in the twenties one would suppose that the elders had held primly aloof from any measure more modern than the rime royale and the Spenserian stanza. The truth is more complex. All the elder writers, and notably Scott and Carman, were experimental; but they had all come under the spell of the rich music of Swinburne and later of Verlaine, and accordingly abominated grit or any roughness of texture. Moreover their long established prestige, supported by some of the most vigorous of the elder critics, made it painfully hard for younger men who had been penetrated by the method and tone of Eliot, Pound and Hopkins to get a hearing.

Much of what the younger generation deplored arose from a cause of which they still seem strangely unaware: the silence and sterility of the generation between. In the period from 1893 to 1923 only two new voices of any notable power sounded: Marjorie Pickthall, born in 1883 (in England) whose first collection came out in 1913 and Tom MacInnes, born in 1867, but not very generally known as a poet until his *Rhymes of a Rounder* came out in 1912. MacInnes, at once a mystic and a zealous experimentalist in old and delicate forms such as the rondeau and the villanelle, has been to the end of his career a lonely figure moving along a side alley of great beauty and oddity. Miss Pickthall, who died young, was powerfully affected by the Celtic Renaissance and seemed in most of her poetry an unhappy exile from Europe. In two or three of her dramatic monologues, however, she showed if not Browning's penetration into character—

she had none of that—at least a little of his feeling for a situation. In her treatment of nature, and much of her work is nature-verse, she was an acceptable continuator of the elder poets who, with their usual courtesy, welcomed her warmly. The younger poets have liked her work as little as theirs.

III

Not until, in 1923, Mr. E. J. Pratt published his first collection, did the second flowering of our poetry begin; indeed 1926, when he published his short Melvillian epic *The Cachalot*, is the true point of beginning, for the collection of 1923 scarcely indicates the direction in which he was to move and gives very imperfect illustrations of his power. It is partly the immense geniality of Mr. Pratt's temperament, but partly also the balance between old and new elements in his verse that has made him the link between the generations of our living poets. As editor of *The Canadian Poetry Magazine* he has been hospitable to all sorts of poetry and has provided a forum of discussion where incompatible opinions can be set forth side by side with some opportunity for authors and readers to perceive where the main currents in our poetry and criticism of poetry run.

The central trait of his verse is his preoccupation with the heroic—his concern with planes of being more spacious and more exalted than the normal life of man. Born on the rock-bound coast of Newfoundland, brought up in a village of fishermen and whalers he has most often sought the heroic in terms of the sea. But the sea—the theatre of *The Cachalot*, *The Titanic*, *The Roosevelt* and *the Antinoe*—is not his sole theme. In *The Fable of the Goats* he found a primitive world prior to the creation of man; and in his latest poem *Brébeuf and His*

*Brethren*¹ he has turned to the heroic exploits of man in the early period of Canadian history. Mr. Pratt's heroic temper expresses itself in his form as well as in his themes. He has developed a bounding resonant tetrameter, so characteristically his that if one came on a passage in the midst of Pound's cantos one would at once exclaim: "That's Pratt!" His choice of words from the rutilant monosyllable to the crashing Latin term of endless length, the spaciousness of his verse-paragraphs, the nervous energy of his structure as well as his rhythm—all these constant traits point to the power of that heroic temper which commands him to the choice of mastodon, cetacean, and martyr-priest.

Heroism, for him, usually goes along with exuberance. His humour is rich, the humour of delighted exaggeration and formidable strength. Even in the solemnity of *Brébeuf* it peeps out in a word or a metrical turn. The marriage of heroism with exuberance awakes no surprise: to these, however, he unexpectedly unites a strong scholarly concern with accuracy. As Thackeray wished to know the color of the breeches General Wolfe wore when he stormed Quebec, Mr. Pratt has been a scrupulous student of ship-construction, marine biology and the *Jesuit Relations*. The intellectual conscience developed through his training in theology, philosophy, psychology and literature has served his heroic temperament admirably, never cowing it, simply furnishing it with rich material thoroughly dominated.

Canadian critics are well aware that none of our poets today is known in Britain and the United States as Carman, and even

¹Reviewed on pp. 48-50 by Pelham Edgar, the most catholic of the elder Canadian critics, and a principal factor in the growth of the poetic reputations of Pratt, Marjorie Pickthall and D. C. Scott.

Lampman, used to be. British and American indifference to Mr. Pratt's narratives we find it hard to understand. In him we seem to note a temper, a metrical tendency, a choice of theme all unique, and, if in many ways quite unmodern, nevertheless vital, exalting, and significant. When I solicited for this collection the help and counsel of the best poets in Canada, more than two or three said to me: "Make Pratt's work known in the United States, that's the great thing to aim at." It must be said that distinguished as some of his lyrics have been, his originality and strength are more notable in the narratives,—poems too long for inclusion in such a collection as this.

IV

In Montreal, shortly after the end of the First World War, a vigorous group of undergraduates conducted an excellent magazine, *The McGill Fortnightly*. In it appeared the poems of A. J. M. Smith, Leo Kennedy, Abraham Klein, and Frank Scott, all experimenters, eager to naturalize in Canada the kind of poetry then being written by Eliot and Pound, all zealots for the metaphysical verse of the seventeenth century and for Emily Dickinson. From their fellowship there was to come long afterward the anthology *New Provinces: Poems by Several Authors* (1936), in which two Toronto poets, Mr. Pratt and Robert Finch also appeared. Two of the Montreal group have brought out volumes of their verse, Leo Kennedy *The Shrouding* (1933), and Abraham Klein *Hath Not a Jew* (1940). Poetry of the same sort as theirs is to be found in Dorothy Livesay's *Signpost* (1932) and in Anne Marriott's *The Wind Our Enemy* (1939).

For a number of years Abraham Klein was under the Eliot spell; in such poems as *The Soirée of Velvel Kleinburger* and

Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens, which represented him in *New Provinces*, he used Eliot's conversational formula and allusive erudition, combining with them a rich Jewish background. His later work has become more and more Jewish: in the volume reviewed in this number¹ he ranges from the most light-hearted Jewish song to the grimmest Jewish satire. His constant use of Jewish material has not been a limiting but rather an enlarging influence: he has made for himself a world of characters, images, actions, and ideas which give a solidity and an intensity to his poetry very rare in our literature.

Frank Scott, now professor of Constitutional Law in McGill University and one of the leading humanitarian idealists in Canada, began with delicate lyrics of exquisite imagery and muted sound; he has since filled his verse with a warm and angry concern for social injustice and social reform. Sometimes, wishing to appeal to a large and relatively uneducated audience, he has striven for a simplicity which is almost unpatterned; again he has contrived to find for his social ideas forms at once simple and beautifully designed. Leo Kennedy, whose Catholic training combined incongruously but effectively in his earlier poems with his fascination by *The Golden Bough* and the books of Jessie Weston, has come in his maturity to a more original manner, exhibiting a power of lusty song in which imagery and diction recalling the metaphysical poets is at the service of strong feeling and eager thought.

Recognized from the outset as the central figure in the group, A. J. M. Smith proceeded from McGill to Edinburgh where he undertook graduate studies in the poetry of the seventeenth cen-

¹On pp. 51-53, by Leon Edel, a critic sympathetic to all the recent movements in Canadian literature, and a contemporary of Klein at McGill University.

tury with the counsel of Sir Herbert Grierson. A professor of English at Michigan State College, he has shown the most acute critical sense of all Canadian poets; and in an article contributed to what is perhaps the main critical journal of Canada, *The University of Toronto Quarterly*, he sets forth the critical tenets of the younger poets with vigorous simplicity:

Set higher standards for yourself than the organized mediocrity of the authors' associations dares to impose. Be traditional, catholic and alive. Study the great masters of clarity and intensity. . . . Study the poets of today whose language is living, and whose line is sure. . . . Read the French and German poets whose sensibility is most intensely that of the modern world . . . Read, if you can, the Roman satirists. . . .

And remember lastly that poetry does not permit the rejection of every aspect of the personality except intuition and sensibility. It must be written by the whole man. It is an intelligent activity, and it ought to compel the respect of the generality of intelligent men. If it is a good, it is a good in itself.

This pronouncement, with which his article concludes, would, I believe, satisfy almost all the younger poets, those in the Montreal group and most of the others yet to be considered.

The principles he sets forth are embodied in Mr. Smith's own verse. Much of this is acutely religious, sometimes in the metaphorical manner, sometimes more in the tone of Hopkins. Some of it is coldly satirical, some politically intense, more politically disillusioned. Little of it has to do with nature, although Mr. Smith has an eye not far inferior to Lampman's for natural detail. Whatever the theme, the execution is beautifully deliberate, and the feeling or thought fully mature and intense.

Loosely attachable to the Montreal group is Robert Finch of Toronto. A professor of French literature, a delicate and deliberate painter, an enthusiast for modern music, his preoccupations have been rather different from those of his Montreal contem-

poraries. His verse is full of suggestions of French poets from Mallarmé down, and his range and use of imagery has unusual originality and purity. No Canadian poet in our time has had in greater degree the love of the word or of design as an autonomous value. His poetry, always solicitous of musical effect, has steadily moved towards sparseness and simplicity. Some of the qualities in his most recent work appear, too, in another Toronto poet, Eustace Ross, unfortunately not represented in this collection, but capable of brief lyrics, sometimes perfect in their timeless simplicity.

Two young women, both with emphatically radical social enthusiasms and preoccupations, have written experimental verse of high interest and on occasion of great distinction. From a mood of delicate introspection and a concern with refined patterns, Dorothy Livesay passed first to deliberately simple verse, packed with social exhortation and invective, and addressed to an unsophisticated audience; and then to a combination of social concern with elaborate modes of expression which suited her individuality, but now the expression was supplanted and purged. The first shift was sudden and violent; it struck many friendly critics as a conscious renunciation and accordingly an aesthetic impoverishment justifiable only in extra-literary terms. The second shift while it has shown that the first was both conscious and impoverishing has also shown that no permanent harm was done by it. A younger writer, coming too late to feel the full impact of metaphysical verse or of Eliot's earlier manner, Anne Marriott¹ readily found an idiom which was conversa-

¹Her brochure, *The Wind Our Enemy*, is reviewed on pp. 53-57, by W. E. Collin, the author of the subtlest study of Canadian poetry, *The White Savannas* (1936).

tional without grit; and has always seemed at liberty to combine with her social concern a manner which was a full expression of her individuality. Her preoccupation with society seems to be that of a total person in whom the critical intelligence has been in harmony with the other elements, never rising to rebuke or dictate, never submerged. Poems somewhat similar in fibre, but more lyrical, have come from Mary Colman.

More conservative strains have been abundantly represented in the poetry of the past twenty years: a glance through the best anthology of recent Canadian verse, Mrs. Ethel Hume Bennett's *New Harvesting* (1938), will show that the majority of competent verse-writers in Canada have been little affected by the movement which began with the *McGill Fortnightly*. Although Mrs. Floris McLaren's reflective lyrics are not traditional, their fine suggestive simplicity is without any likeness to the work of the poets in *New Provinces*. Some of the conservative writers have struck notes of power, if not of originality: Mrs. Louise Morey Bowman has written imagist poetry of real distinction, Mr. A. S. Bourinot and Mr. Kenneth Leslie have written sonnets of musical sweetness and, often, of intense and finely controlled feeling; Mr. L. A. MacKay—as well as being our most angry and clever satirist—has written rich descriptive pieces recalling Hérédia and the middle manner of William Morris; and many members of the Roberts family have written nature verse accurate, musical, and striking, if never approaching the excellence of their chieftain—with whom our poetry began.

E. K. Brown

R E V I E W S

AN EPIC OF THE JESUIT MARTYRS

Brébeuf and His Brethren, by E. J. Pratt. Macmillan, Toronto.

MR. PRATT'S previously published work is of sterling quality. His latest production stamps him as a poet who would not suffer by comparison with any narrative poet of our age. Canadians naturally respond to it as a thrilling representation of our history at a period when France was striving to dominate the continent, and Catholics the world over will find their satisfaction in the fact that a Protestant has been inspired to write the noblest Catholic poem of modern times. The period presented is the second quarter of the seventeenth century, the locale the country surrounding the present towns of Midland and Penetanguishene on the Georgian Bay, and the actors in the drama are the Huron and Iroquois Indians with the eight martyrs who are now inscribed as Saints in the Roman Calendar. Since they stand alone in North America their names are here given: Brébeuf, Lalemant, Garnier, Jogues, Chabanel, Daniel, Goupil, Lalonde. The poem is fitly named *Brébeuf and His Brethren*, but the towering figure among them all is Brébeuf.

The poem opens sonorously with a description of the religious fervour that swept through France in the early days of the seventeenth century. Stirred by the ecstasy of vision and profound meditation, the young Brébeuf dedicates himself to service in the New World:

Forests and streams and trails thronged through his mind,
The painted faces of the Iroquois and Huron,
Nomadic bands and smoking bivouacs
Along the shores of western inland seas,
With forts and palisades and fiery stakes.

The stories of Champlain, Brulé, Viel,
Sagard and Le Caron had reached his town—
The stories of those northern boundaries
Where in the winter the white pines could brush
The Pleiades, and at the equinoxes
Under the gold and green of the auroras
Wild geese drove wedges through the zodiac.

We are now carried through the early years of Brébeuf's Canadian life, journeys into the wilderness, contacts with friendly and hostile Indians, the painful but complete mastery of their language, and with the aid of his devoted associates the conversion of the Huron tribes to the Christian faith. This was the goal of all their effort, yet it was not conversion alone that was aimed at, but with conversion an initiation into the principles of the good life. The Jesuits could never forget that they were not missionaries only but teachers as well. We cannot see that political intentions entered into their strategy. Champlain nourished great plans for the triumph of France in the New World, and that triumph necessitated the crushing of the Iroquois power. The Jesuits were, at the most, unconscious instruments in his scheme, and they viewed the encroachments of the Iroquois not as a menace to political dominion but as a threatened dissolution of their Christian effort. The crash came, and eight of that Jesuit band suffered martyrdom with all the torture that was its prelude.

These are the circumstances that give movement and vitality to Mr. Pratt's great poem. He is not concerned with apportioning praise or blame, but he succeeds in avoiding the passionlessness of a too serene objectivity, for we are left in no doubt as to his throbbing sympathy with his martyr heroes. The savages are in the conventional sense the villains of the piece, and for them the poet has if not full sympathy at least a sympathetic

understanding. As individuals they do not exist, but in the mass they are most convincing, and, as the Jesuits found them, not wholly unloveable.

This poem is Mr. Pratt's first long effort in blank verse, a form which admittedly exhibits most patently the virtues or defects of a poet's rhythmic sense. He has come through his first trial with success, and even with distinction. The slower movement of the line precludes of course the nimbleness of the rhymed tetrameters which he had made so characteristically his own, but in this, his first sustained venture into another medium, a strong individual quality asserts itself beneath the traditional form. He moves along the heights with power, and when the tension of his theme relaxes his language is crisp and expressive with no attempt at a simulated grandeur. It seems to be true that a poet who can achieve grandeur is almost incapable of flatness. This statement may be tested by reference to the several letters that Pratt has included in his narrative, and most satisfactorily by Brébeuf's letter to the neophyte missionaries from France.

It will be noted that as the tragic climax of the poem approaches the rhythm shifts to the anapaestic key, with occasional passages of blank verse that have a faint anapaestic quality.

It seems a pity to have a poem of this high value available only to Canadian readers, since our history of that period is your history also, as Parkman knew. In its own country it has already passed into a second edition, and a third will soon be called for. There are plans also in hand for making the poem the basis of a musical and dramatic pageant to be held at the Shrine of Fort Sainte Marie, where the scenes were enacted more than three hundred years ago.

Pelham Edgar

POETRY AND THE JEWISH TRADITION

Hasb Not a Jew . . ., by A. M. Klein. Foreword by Ludwig Lewisohn. Behrman's Jewish Book House, New York.

The poetry of Abraham Moses Klein springs from the roots of a consciousness where Hebrew and legal lore have become strangely and exotically intermingled with Shakespeare and T. S. Eliot. Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn, in a preface to these verses, calls him "the first Jew to contribute authentic poetry to the literature of English speech." Certainly Klein, heir to an authentic Jewish tradition, reflects that tradition in every line he writes. His verses are declamatory because far back the prophets too spoke as from the rooftops and because down the centuries Jews have, like Klein's Reb. Levi Yitschok, lectured to God. His wit is the dry wit of the medieval scholar; his reasoning is legalistic, not because he happens to be a lawyer, but because the talmudists were great reasoners and hair-splitters. His use of language is wholly Jewish in his search for high-sounding, pontifical words which, cunningly employed (as exemplified in Disraeli's classic reference to the gentleman "intoxicated by the exuberance of his own verbosity") is exciting and exotic, but runs the risk of surfeiting the reader. One can almost hear Mr Klein smacking his lips over

Of yore yclept in old Judaea Zvi;
Cognomen'd Cerf where Latin speech is carolled,
Dubbed Hirsch, a transient, in wild Allmany,
For sweet conformity now appellated Harold . . .

A decade ago, when he was a young law student, he wrote of the "litttle Jew"—the junk dealer and the second-hand clothes man, the Jewish women at the market in Montreal's St. Lawrence main, and brother Velvel, who nightly played cards in the back rooms of delicatessens and "garrulous barber shops," dreaming

of the Rolls Royce he would like to own and the jewels for his wife

. . . as large as wondrous eyes
The eyes of Og, the giant king of Bashan.

These poems were close to the modern ghetto and therefore close to life; they were filled with witty observation and a delightful mixture of the real and the fantastic; they were pungent, vigorous and above all true.

Now he has collected a series of "Jewish" poems, built around quaint conceits and elaborate whimsicalities; poems of prayer for the fate of Israel, Chassidic dances, the legends and lore of the ghettos of Prague and Warsaw. It is clear that the Hitlerian era of persecution has driven Klein far into the past. In his eloquent *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the beginning of which I have quoted, he comes to an ending of bland resignation:

This only is mine wherewith to face the horde:
The frozen patience waiting for its day,
The stance long-suffering, the stoic word,
The bright empirics that know well that the
Night of the cauchemar comes and goes away,—
A baleful wind, a baneful nebula, over
A saecular imperturbability.

Klein is waiting for the Messiah.

"The stoic word" and the "bright empirics" make good reading, and entertaining reading; but one tires after a while of intellectual firecrackers and asks for a little more of the reality which A. M. Klein sees around him every day, as he must, for instance, in the echoing corridors of the court house on Notre Dame street east. In some of these poems an airy lyricism emerges, only to be smothered in euphuisms. The verse is always robust and there is much technical virtuosity; there is depth of feeling, as when he writes of Spinoza, and a lively sense of the incongruous. He tells pretty stories of kings and beggars—but

they are all resigned beggars. The lack of discipline, which in his younger verse gave the sense of a rich vein of poetry flowing unchecked, now becomes a defect. There has been insufficient self-criticism. Lines such as

He will go to the synagogue of Berditchev,
And there sieve out his complaints in a dolorous sieve.

have been allowed to stand. One wishes that Klein had pressed a little harder.

The collection does Klein a distinct disservice in that it is not sufficiently representative of his remarkable gifts, the gift above all of eloquent rebellion. He quotes Shylock: "Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands?" without Shylock's fierce defiance, closing his eyes and folding his hands and dreaming sweet dreams of a glamorous ghetto. He forgets that in Shylock there was no "frozen patience," for his passion and pride of race burned with a clear, angry, consuming flame

And yet, despite their flaws, these poems are a poetic key to an ancient, deep-rooted, emotional and intellectual tradition. As such they can lay claim to vitality and importance.

Leon Edel

DROUGHT ON THE PRAIRIES

The Wind Our Enemy, by Anne Marriott. Ryerson Press, Toronto.

The Ryerson Press, of Toronto, has, for many years now, issued inexpensive little publications called Chap-books, which have brought to our notice the work of our younger poets. It is to be congratulated for publishing Miss Marriott's poem, *The Wind Our Enemy*, in this series.

Without a doubt this dramatic narrative is an important poem,

not merely because it dramatizes a moment of our human story, here in Canada, but also by virtue of its intrinsic poetic power. The vast prairies of Western Canada, known the world over for their abundant wheat harvests, have recently suffered a widespread drought. Rain failed them, the parched soil became dust which, blown by the wind, settled upon everything, so that the landscape was nothing but wind and dust and a metallic sky. There was no water for the cattle and horses. Eventually they had to be left to wander about until they fell exhausted. The eastern provinces, more favoured by nature, sent carloads of provisions to relieve the distress of the Western farmers. But it is evident from the poem that they only imperfectly realized that distress.

Miss Marriott tells the story from the inside. Its poetic power derives partly from the use of literary devices which have entered the stream of Canadian poetry as a consequence of familiarity with poets like T. S. Eliot and created a new tradition. Instead of giving us all the objects in the field of vision, Miss Marriott selects those—wheat, granaries, Russian thistles, sky, land, wind, dust—which have dramatic meaning, which are characters in action, not things to be described. The prologue is good because it is a picture of what wind *does*. It is our enemy, a beast of prey which stops at nothing:

Wind
flattening its gaunt furious self against
the naked siding, knifing in the wounds
of time, pausing to tear aside the last
old scab of paint.

And it contains the whole dramatic gesture: hunger and the howling of the wind as of a wolf at our vitals. The same instinct chooses, out of the many moments of the history, only the sig-

nificant ones, moments of consciousness, we might call them, which compose the "scenes" of the spectacle; we feel the tragedy through them. There is the first consciousness of drought: "Crops dried out—everywhere—"; the clinging to hope: "Sure, it'll rain next year!" Then, as the reality begins to possess his mind, the farmer wistfully contrasts the past:

Wind tangling wild manes, dust circling wild hoofs,—
Then heart thrilled fast and the veins filled with glory—
The flying, the rhythm, of untamed, unshod feet!

with the present:

Dull—heads sagging—crowding to the trough—
No more spirit than a barren cow.

The old mare . . .

Saw a water-drum, and staggering to its rim,
Plodded around it—on and on in hard
Madly relentless circle. Weaker—stumbling—
She fell quite suddenly, heaved once and lay.

The newspapers tell of relief cars; but also of wars and wrecks, and, by comparison, he thought: "Maybe we're not as badly off as some—" The supper-dance in the schoolhouse, designed to silence sorrow, is but a mirage the next morning. Then, in the deepest distress of soul, sadly reflecting that others are occupied with their own troubles, dust is felt as a wall cutting off human communication. These moments of consciousness are conveyed by typical speech-fragments and other devices, but most forcibly, perhaps, by surprising similes. The poet gives merely a part of an object: "white hoofs and brown," "the sweaty cap," "red eyes," "greying the hair"; objects, isolated in themselves, but significant elements in the dramatic economy: "bitter dust soiling the water pail"—empty of water. This power of suggestion is impaired when too many pictures compress themselves into one line:

Frail threads needled by sunshine like thin gold.

But it is strong in this striking and very apt simile:

But sky like a new tin pan
Hot from the oven
Seemed soldered to the earth by horizons of glare.

Although the feminine mind may continue an image after its poetic strength is exhausted:

(Two-ninety-eight, Sale Catalogue)

Perhaps the farmer's wife's mind did so jump, but the reader's mind, more aesthetically occupied, sulkily turns from black earth and wheat and granaries to Eaton's Catalogue.

Thus, by a logic of sense impressions and a marriage of sensation with feeling, converging their functions into that of symbol:

Presently the dark dust seemed to build a wall
That cut them off from east and west and north,
Kindness and honesty, things they used to know,
Seemed blown away and lost
In frantic soil.

the drama is brought to its final issue. The *mise en scène*:

The sun goes down. Earth like a thick black coin
Leans its round rim against the yellowed sky.
The air cools Kerosene lamps are filled and lit
In dusty windows. Tired bodies crave to lie
In bed forever. Chores are done at last
A thin horse neighs drearily.

is an excellent example of the impressionistic art I have touched upon, every image, noun, and adjective telling the same tale. And against these shapes, as it were ghosts of real things:

—against the yellow sky, a part
Of the jetty silhouette of barn and house
Two figures stand, heads close, arms locked,
And suddenly some spirit seems to rouse
And gleam, like a thin sword, tarnished, bent,
But still shining in the spared beauty of moon,
As his strained voice says to her, "We're not licked yet!
It must rain again—it *will*! Maybe—soon—"

Perhaps this scene is the epitome of the human spectacle, of the eternal spirit of man and woman, eternally hoping, pledging an eternal troth, while all the universe about them is disintegrating in the teeth of relentless wind and everlasting drought.

W. E. Collin

NEWS NOTES

ALTHOUGH POETRY has devoted several issues to the work of English poets, and at least one issue to Latin American poets, this is the first Canadian number in our history. It has been assumed, by editors and readers in general, that the work of Canadian writers would make itself known in this country through the usual publishing channels; that it would be as readily available for publication as the work of European writers. For various reasons, however, this has not been the case. New poets are "discovered" almost simultaneously here and in England, their careers are fostered by magazines and book publishers in both countries, but there is as yet no comparable interchange between the United States and Canada. Our textbooks and anthologies which are supposed to give a broad general idea of modern poetry (including a host of minor talents on both sides of the Atlantic) rarely contain any mention of the leading Canadian poets. It would take too long to explain how this situation has come about; at all events, we have felt for some time that it should be recognized and corrected. The first need was to provide readers and students with a brief survey article on Canadian poetry, a critical and historical summary, and in this connection we have thought that a special number of POETRY would be useful. When Mr. E. K. Brown consented to write such an article and to edit the number, we knew that an effective beginning would be made.

Four of the contributors to this issue, Louise Morey Bowman, Leo Kennedy, A. M. Klein, and A. J. M. Smith, have published previously here; the others appear for the first time. Since our guest editor has given some information about all the poets and reviewers in his essay, we have not included the usual notes on contributors. However, we should like to supply one omission. E. K. Brown was born in Toronto in 1905, educated at the University of Toronto and the University of Paris (*Docteur-ès-lettres*, 1935), and was later Chairman of the English department in the University of Manitoba. He is now Professor of English at the University of Toronto. Among his books are *Edith Wharton, étude critique*; *Studies in the Text of Matthew Arnold's Prose Works*; *Representative Essays of Matthew Arnold*; a translation of Louis Cazamian's

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Carlyle; a symposium, *Canadian Literature Today* and an anthology, *Victorian Poetry*, the latter being now in press. He contributes the annual survey of poetry to *Letters in Canada* (an annual review published by *The University of Toronto Quarterly*), and has written a large number of articles on modern poetry and fiction.

We hope that we shall have the pleasure of presenting future work by all these contributors.

Two summer opportunities for young writers require notice this month.

The trustees of the Cummington School announce a series of conferences under the leadership of distinguished American writers, including Alfred Young Fisher, R. P. Blackmur, Allen Tate, Katherine Anne Porter, and Delmore Schwartz. A competitive scholarship for this course is offered. Candidates must have completed secondary school and have done "considerable serious writing." The scholarship provides living and instruction for ten weeks, and is open to young men and women alike, but only to those who cannot finance their study without full aid. All applications must be filed complete before May 1st. Candidates should send for application blanks and instructions; they should not send examples of their work until notified to do so. Address Registrar, Cummington School, Cummington, Mass.

A group of "determined but not yet established writers" is being formed to hold conversations about poetry and prose, and to have their manuscripts criticized, at Hanover, N. H., July 9th to August 16th, under the direction of the famous teacher, Sidney Cox. There will be personal conferences and three group meetings a week. Mr. Cox is Professor of English at Dartmouth, and has taught writing at Bread Loaf, Columbia, the Cummington School, and elsewhere. He has told something about his way of teaching in an article in the Fall 1940 issue of *Kenyon Review*. Members of the group will be selected on the basis of specimens of their work, not in excess of 5,000 words, submitted not later than June 1st. For other particulars address Mr. Cox at Hanover, N. H.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Rhymed Ruminations*, by Siegfried Sassoon. Viking Press.
Open House, by Theodore Roethke. Alfred A. Knopf.
Angle of Earth and Sky, by David Morton. Macmillan Co.
Under the Sun, by Arthur S. Bourinot. Macmillan Co., Canada.
Androscoggin, by Marsden Hartley. Falmouth Pub. House, Portland, Me.
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P O E T R Y

A M A G A Z I N E O F V E R S E

VOL. LVIII

NO. III

JUNE 1941

NINE POEMS

A CHARACTER

BASED like a rock, he so abides:
He stands alone in his own stead.
"What I have said," he says, "I have said."
The blows of Fate
May break his pate;
They will not shake Old Sober-sides.

He weighs, considers, and decides;
No flunkey of the powers that be.
His patient, stubborn, "Wait and see,"
Leaves ample room
For what may come
From whencesoever, to Sober-sides.

P O E T R Y : *A Magazine of Verse*

Byes he may bowl; not No's or Wides;
Pitch, length, pace, he'll keep all day.
That square packed head, broad nose, the way
 He stands, fixed eyes,
 Shoulders and thighs,
"Get the man *out!*" says Sober-sides.

What stirs him to the bone he hides;
He has no use for sentiment.
He goes the way he always went.
 Others may range
 And veer and change
East, West—not so, Old Sober-sides.

No point too nice his mind divides;
He tracks a problem to its root;
His Nay is Nay, and absolute.
 Shades, tints and hues,
 Fancies and views?—
"I am convinced," says Sober-sides

Nothing cares he what else betides.
Words are mere words, but facts are facts.
No fumbling doubts for him he acts.
 Staunch, wideawake,
 The rack, the stake
He'd face unmoved, Old Sober-sides.

Simple as solid, he confides
 The all he has in what he loves,
 And that upon his pulses proves.
 Nature and Art
 May play their part;
 His soul's his own, Old Sober-sides.

Blockheads like this the World derides.
 Fools scoff. Vice spits, and turns away.
 The clever look for easier prey;
 Or eye askance
 Such ignorance
 And he stares back, Old Sober-sides.

Age creeps, sands sink, Time onward glides.
 Unfaltering friend, unflinching foe,
 The hour will strike when he must go.
 But if the grave
 A secret have,
 He fears it not, Old Sober-sides.

Dogging life's high road, he bestrides
Horse Sense. Alas, the loveliness
 Wasting beyond the wayside trees;
 The dells, the dales,
 The nightingales,
 The sweetness and grace, Old Sober-sides!

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Man's heart—that sea—has its own tides
Which flow and ebb. And many move
Obedient to a moon called love.

But full, sure, slow,
Great rivers flow;
And, at their source, sits Sober-sides.

THE SECRET

I bless the hand that once held mine,
The lips that said:
No heart, though kiss were Circe's wine,
Can long be comforted.

Ay, if we'd talked day in, night out,
Of all life marvels at—
One secret, soul can utter not,
Nor self to self relate.

We gazed, enraptured, thou and I,
As flower might at flower;
But speechless stayed, past even a sigh.
Not even Babel Tower

Heard language strange and sweet enough
To tell that moment's peace,
Where broods the Phoenix, timeless Love,
And divine silence is.

ENOUGH

Pleasure early, pleasure late
Brings a fool to fool's estate:
Oh, the fields of tares that lie
When sickled Age goes hobbling by.

Toiling late and moiling early
Brings a sour heart and churly:
Oh, then, what a coil I'm in,
For to find the golden mean!

A FIDDLER

Here lies a fiddler, play could he
Sweet as a bird in an almond tree.
Fingers and strings—they seemed to agree
Life itself is a melody
Up slid his bow, sloped leisurely—
Music's self was its witchery.
His gut is broken. Mute lies he.
And the bird sings on in the almond tree.

A TAILOR

Here lies a tailor; let him rest.
Of all man's ninths he was the best.
He plied his needle early and late
Yet now must in one garment wait.
Scoff not, ye tinsel-robed, I wist

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

One only wore the bridegroom's guest;
And in his long years' stitching he
Knew what poor folk fops naked be.

CROPS

Farmer Giles has cut his rye;
Oh my! Oh my!
Farmer Bates has cut his wheat;
Och, the thieving hares in it!

Farmer Turvey's cut his barley;
Ripe and early, ripe and early.
And where day breaks, rousing not,
Farmer Weary's cut his throat

IMMANENT

The drone of airplane neared, and dimmed away,
The child beyond high-tide mark still toiled on;
Salt water welled the trench that in his play
He'd dug to beleaguer his grey fortress stone.
Lovely as Eros, and half-naked too,
He heaped dried beach-drift, kindled it, and lo!
The furious furnace roared, the sea-winds blew—
Vengeance divine; and death to every foe!
Young god! and not ev'n Nature eyed askance
The fire-doomed Empire of a myriad Ants.

POETRY

In stagnant gloom I toil thro' day,
All that delights me put away.
Not even a bird, to one oppressed,
Warbles in an o'erlabored breast,
Nor from the fountains of delight
Falls one clear drop to ease my sight.

Yet, Thou who mad'st of dust my face,
And shut me in this bitter place,
Thou also, past the world to know,
Did hinges hang where heart may go
After day's travail—vain all words—
Into this garden of the Lord's.

THE VERY SELF

Clear eyes, beneath clear brows, gaze out at me,
Clear, true and lovely things therein I see;
Yet mystery, past ev'n naming, takes their place
As mine stay pondering on that much-loved face.

Walter de la Mare

EPILOGUE FOR PILATE

1

What I believed in early youth
Exactly was the gospel truth.
What I believe today
Also is truth, the wise men say;
And what I happen to believe tomorrow,
That too is truth, to logic's verbal sorrow.

Truth, then, is not the truth,
Is neither true nor false:
It is not this and is not that,
But it is something else.

The truth, they said to me one time,
Is abstract, waiting here and there,
Is quite obliged to hang
Suspended in the air.

But someone winked at that.
The truth, they said again,
Is real and lives in town or farm,
Is neither bad nor good;
The truth, they said, sleeps in the sun
And eats inside a block of wood.

2

The truth is my reality,
Is what is real and true for me.

CHARLES MILLER

The truth is not within this word,
Is not in what was handed down or heard,
Is not the song that stirred:
The truth is nothing but the bird.
The truth is in the thing beyond the word.

The truth is relative to me,
Is what I live and what I see.

Truth is the sun that makes grass green
And burns it brown;
It is the rain that builds the tree
Then floods it down.

Truth is the filthy hungry bum
That asks for food;
It is the pampered daughter in
A pampered mood.

The truth is more the workman clinching
Rivets on a car
Than a professor showing all the cosmic
Habits of a star.

The truth is more the dog that growls
To keep his bone
Than theories of the power of
A new hormone.

The truth is more the bird's
Unworried look

Than forty quite distinct philosophies
Within one book.

Truth is intrinsic in
The sensory thing;
It is the tone and not
The words you sing.

The truth is fiction laid upon
The earthy fact,
Is valid only in
The living act;
Is our unabsolute approach
To what is in each cell,
The ape's inherent urge for food,
And the scholar's wordy hell.

Charles Miller

BRIAREUS

Hold out the thicket of your hands
Where I can run at last and hide;
Briareus, immerse me in
The ragged waters of your side.

The Titans with their terror march;
The Titans like a massive sea.
Reach out your fingered rivers now,
Briareus, unbroken tree.

Kenneth Slade Alling

ON A PAINTING BY ROUSSEAU

The clouds seem neater than the trees.
The sky, like faded overalls,
Breaks the distances of sight;
And shadow that defines the curb
Shelters the silhouette of dog
Who, waiting patiently beneath
The amazing carriage with tangerine wheels,
Is eyeless, though he seems to sense
The black Chihuahua that the pavement grows

The street is bare. The hooves and mane
Of the posing horse and his speckled flanks
Flow back to the six in the cart he draws:
The idiot aunt and the girl in white
(A ventriloquist's doll with a colorless wig),
And a sexless figure upon whose lap
A beast is squatting, macabre, blurred.

These four and the one in the yellow hat
Regard us with eyes like photographs
That have been shown us long ago.
—All but the man in the driver's seat,
His wax hands fastened on the reins,
Who, from the corners of his eyes,
Watches the horse he does not trust.

Weldon Kees

(First half)

An impulse to action sings of a semblance
Of things related as equated values,
The measure all use is time congealed labor
In which abstraction things keep no resemblance
To goods created; integrated all hues
Hide their natural use to one or one's neighbor.
So that were the things words they could say. Light is
Like night is like us when we meet our mentors
Use hardly enters into their exchanges,
Bought to be sold things, our value arranges;
We flee people who made us as a right is
Whose sight is quick to choose us as frequenters,
But see our centers do not show the changes
Of human labor our value estranges.

Values in series taking on as real
We affect ready gold a steady token
Flows in unbroken circuit and induces
Our being, wearies of us as ideal
Equals that heady crises eddy. Broken
Mentors, unspoken wealth labor produces,
Now loom as causes disposing our loci,
The foci of production. things reflected
As wills subjected; formed in the division
Of labor, labor takes on our imprecision—
Bought, induced by gold at no gain, though close eye

And gross sigh fixed upon gain have effected
 Value erected on labor, prevision
 Of surplus value, disparate decision.

Hands, heart, not value made us, and of any
 Desired perfection the projection solely,
 Lives worked us slowly to delight the senses,
 Of their fire shall you find us, of the many
 Acts of direction not defection—wholly
 Dead labor, lowlier with time's offenses,
 Assumed things of labor powers extorted
 So thwarted we are together impeded—
 The labor speeded while our worth decreases—
 Naturally surplus value increases
 Being incident to the pace exhorted.
 Unsorted, indrawn, but things that time ceded
 To life exceeded—not change, the mind pieces
 The expanse of labor in us when it ceases.

Light acts beyond the phase day wills us into
 Call a maturer day, the poor are torn—a
 Pawl to adorn a ratchet—hope dim—eying
 Move cangues, conjoined the coils of things they thin to,
 With allayed furor the obscurer bourne, a
 Stopped hope unworn, a voiced look, mask espying
 That, as things, men want in us yet behoove us,
 Disprove us least as things of light appearing
 To the will gearing to light's infinite locus:
 Not today but tomorrow is their focus.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

No one really knows us who does not prove us,
None or times move us but that we wake searing
The labor veering from guises which cloak us,
As animate instruments men invoke us.

Dissemble—pledging complexions so guarded—
Cast of plied error leaves such error asserted
But stand obverted, men sight us things joined to
Change itself edging the full light discarded—
In machines' terror a use there averted—
Times have subverted the plenty they point to:
Things, we have not always known this division—
Misprision of interest, profit, rent—coded
Surplus, decoded as labor—evaded
As gain the source of all wealth so degraded
The land and the worker elude the vision—
A scission of surplus and use corroded
And still, things goaded by labor, nor faded,
But like light in which its action was aided.

We are things, say, like a quantum of action
Defined product of energy and time, now
In these words which rhyme now how song's exaction
Forces abstraction to turn from equated
Values to labor we have approximated.

Louis Zukofsky

TWO POEMS

ONLY THE YEARS

Sea shell and flower corolla and strict blade of a wing,
The thigh's clean line, the pure curve of the breast—
All natural objects bred to the final form, the simple thing
Out of time past,

These flawless know survival. Year upon long year served
Their special use, shaping design to need:
The shell's enameled cone, the tapering thigh, the carved
And segment-fitted seed.

Down through the generations craftsmen, creators
Have passed the gift of power from palm to palm—
Gift dreamed in the laboring mind, taken in love greatly
Alive and warm,

Nor ripped in one stroke from the body, bloodless and shining,
Not hacked out raw from the secreting stone
Came the essential thing, the ultimate simple line
Exact, alone.

(How many ages blind, till the seeking eye might prove
In light through glass one cell's minute perfection,
—Years motion-locked till the piston functioned smooth
As the heel's tendon?)

Men of our time, workers in wood, fabric or metal
Strip ornament from structure: beauty is line
In use: the bridge harp-cabled, the ship's deep keel
The wing-spread of the plane.

But not in our time, not yet, is the pattern for life drawn clean:
The mind's unserved, the flesh misused, the breath
Chokes in the terrible net spread dark between
Our birth and death:

When shall we strip off the false and intricate decay
That rival nations value: in what hour
Strike the tools of craft from the hands of madness, save
The gift of power?

Only the years that lie on the far edge of light
Shall answer us, the possible future see
Tempered in blood and fire beyond this shadow of our night
The simple form set free.

QUIZ PROGRAM

Whatever happens, let us dedicate this hour of our lives
To question and answer: tomorrow may not roll on little wheels
Into our bedroom, the future may be now, the far-off here,
We may neither guess the time that lies under our heels
During the last pretense of sleep, nor dream
A real dream in daylight: let us fear
Nothing for an hour at least—maybe we'll know and maybe
win the prize.

This one comes from a man in Lexington, Ky., asking who
Stole his job . . . but he doesn't say when, so
Let's take another. Speaking of enemies and allies, why
Are the sins of the small nations unforgivable? No, lady, no.
Because taxi-drivers are seldom oracular,
With grief like a bandage around our heads, we try

Not to think too much before breakfast. True or false? True.

Listen carefully: this is harder. What followed when
Three German aviators were dropped on an English shore
(Green waves took them flaming, death grinned from their
eyes)

—We lifted the Embargo because there weren't four.

But speech is not always free, and if as you say

The dog gnawing Democracy's bone is Mister Dies
Whoever believes that dew falls can still believe in the rights
of man.

You must guess two out of three: "Leave now the lovely light"
Is from what poem; when marketing will you buy
(Wheat and corn steady, steel closing up fractions, aviation
firm)

Red plum or white cauliflower or the shattered thigh
Of a woman bombed, or the torn hands of children . . .

If love overcomes all, will there be a fourth term?

Sorry: you lose. Be with us next week, and thank you: goodnight.

Desperate for the sign, the clue, or the word, our eyes comb
The headlines and bylines. Bewildered, we turn our ears
To all the great networks of the screaming air.
Why are we afraid? What name does Time have for the
black years

Marching before us? Tell us, Professor Quiz and Information
Please,

We don't know the answers. We know only the bare
Shape of silence among us, after the Voice in the room

Ruth Lechlitrer

T W O P O E M S

POST MORTEM

Here is the private death that old men need,
and nuns who loose their innocence in graves,
and one expectant daughter who can read
her epitaph to find the sin it saves;
now and at last set down in burial verse.
The brave will not be lost, they too will share
in poetry, whose love may reimburse
for their hard wounds and reingrave each care.
"Poor bones," they say, "forgive our need of you,
we only call you to relieve our tears."
The well-born sonnets excavate the clue
of death, and crowd the pulpit with their cheers.
A dead man fructifies but little room
until you sweep the nickels from his tomb.

LEBENSRAUM

The golden maps are spread across the field,
the grass dries up, the boulders flatten down,
the field mice prattle of a new renown;
and in the sectioned light the hedges yield
uncertain berries, though their boughs are sealed
against the season's wind. A simple crown
is raised above the trees, by men who frown
with curious dignity, their eyes concealed,

inverted daggers mounted on their chests.
 Seeing reflections from the tattered sky
 annul their geographic planes in nests
 of shade, that draw their latitudes awry,
 they screen the field with canopies and crests
 Now crickets have the dark to verify.

John Hay

THOMAS MANN

The climate of his careful observation,
 Burgher and poet in his green embrace,
 Was given to techniques and introspection;
 And his continuous theme was the disgrace
 That tore him like a mistress and a wife.
 His curious southern hunger broke the fast
 Within the mighty fortress of his God.
 He sometimes shuddered but found nothing odd,
 But loathed and savored evil like a priest,
 Whose studied dying had become his life.
 And when, according to his old suspicion,
 His ocean left him for a sounder shore,
 Before it shrank he saw the need to ration
 The ambergris of his immense frustration,
 And gave the placid world one horror more.

Dean Jeffress

THREE POEMS

I

PARLIAMENT OF GIRAFFES

I was speaking of oranges to a lady
of great goodness when O the lovely

giraffes came. Soon it was all their
splendor about us and my throat

ached with the voice of great larks.
O the giraffes were so beautiful as

if they meant to stagger us by such
overwhelming vision: Let us give

each a rose said my beautiful lady
of great goodness and we sent the

larks away to find roses. It was
while the larks were away that

the whitest giraffe among them
and the golddest one among them

O these two loveliest ones sought
and found us: bent before us two

kneeling with their divine heads
bowed. And it was then we knew

why all this loveliness was sent
us: the white prince and the golden

princess kneeling: to adore us
brightly: we the Perfect Lovers.

II

her day-rose is much sweet
her kisses are most love
such kissness is not told
withouten her rose's fold

but birds bees best lovers
brave lovers aseeken more
a seekness as of God's word
their loverness hath sword

for girlshape has girlgraces
of day-rose and night-rose
though day-rose be much sweet
yet night-rose is sevenly sweet

there where her night begins
there be her goldest roset rose
that in her deep wisdom knows
boygrace will knight her Rose

O there where her night begins
there be her wondrous wondrous rose
O withouten her night-rose
I be forlornly aloss aloss

III

I can no more hear Love's
Voice. No more moves
The mouth of her. Birds
No more sing. Words
I speak return lonely.
Flowers I pick turn ghostly.
Fire that I burn glows
Pale. No more blows
The wind. Time tells
No more truth. Bells
Ring no more in me.
I am all alone singly.
Lonely rests my head
—O my God! I am dead

José García Villa

ODE

Every imitation is an act of praise!
And what if your lips, tongue, cheek
Continue without end in me? One taken away
So far from self is innocent,
And thus your image here is pure,
And I, touched with it, have lost almost
 The hankering that slays

Stranger, like a hillside of unfamiliar herbs,
With quick and gentle confusions you riddle me—
This divine suburb,
Through what endless intersecting avenues
Did I make my way to it? And even now
Far behind
Another immigrant watches anxiously:
It is the doll of self that never will arrive.

Were you willing? Or is it a magic,
Some power and current created by leaving
A vacuum open, that draws you
As if down a slope running
Into the springe of such loving as mine,
Whose guarded graspings habituated only to squeals
Of small despairs now hold your
Lovely and sure-soon-to-depart ankle
 Amid its rubbish of leaves?

The likeness of you I strive to contain
Is, we know, only a breath not let go

Until something of your scent has made of it
A gasp of praise—
Like that with which Man sounds
His sudden, dazed, miraculous misstep
Into the air of a better world.

Harold Rosenberg

DIFFERENTIA

Love for one's child
is a spring
bursting from strata of earth,
garnered from sky-showers.

Love for one's mate
is a wild brook
hurtling from rock to rock,
pouring into deep pools.

Love for one's friends
is a river,
curving, full of reflections,
tinged with calm colors.

Love for one's kind
is an ocean,
domed, tidal, wide as the sky,
deep, deep below islands and shores,
maker of rain,
of all streams,
of itself.

Emily Porter St. John

FOUR POEMS

SWEDISH ANGEL

The Swedish angel is nine inches high and shaped all of blonde
straw.

All of blonde straw is her little body and her great seven-inch
wings.

Her small head is of painted wood and she stands in a slim wood
base.

Shining and shining in the Christmas candles, shines her golden
halo.

Even all round her is a kind of shining, circle on circle, because
She has—as if—lighted upon a round lake of clear glass
Surrounded by ground-pine and red berries which gleam also
In the candlelight that moves on her stilled blonde wings.

In this immaculate doll of heaven has been conceived, as though
No hands had shaped her, an uninvented innocence bequeathing
grace

Ring upon ring in halos all around her, and not remote nor kind
But only there, dispensing of all the brought light a total larger
light.

Even now her wings have assumed such shields of glory and the
pool beneath

Wheels with such wreaths of shining, the room is gathered and
filled

By her tall and burning stillness and, an actual angel, her suspen-
sion wars

For a whole minute against all the dark, as if I were a child.

DIRECTION

When will thinking make a poet?
—When desire creates a woman.

I have thought about it all,
The human, miscalled inhuman,
Badness of my time, and know it;
And have come to wish at length
From old weakness or new strength
For a town, self-centered, small
And known, where everything is common:
Each know my name, I his,
Our grandfathers' reminiscences,
Who's latest dead and newest born,
Winter, spring, summer, fall.

My business, no more watched than here,
Might take example from a tree
If there were few and I chose one
And with impersonal privacy
Put summer off and winter on,
Leaf again and strip again
Not with weather but the season.

Or even this may be too dear
These times and too complicated.
I might be better still alone
To concentrate, say, on one stone
And find what there was concentrated.
First the rock and then desire;

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT

—As a child with an old doll
Which long-held, long-loved, is all
Of love: and easier to require
One rock to be all world and known
Than wait for world to turn to stone.

NATURAL CAUSES

I died, and they looked in my head· $2+2$
Equals 3, and the faucet that dripped unmended,
The cracked gauge on the furnace, the fraying cuff

—These they found, and ten unpaid bills, and
 $2+2$ equals 2; certain marbles I lost as a child
Through a boardwalk; a flamingo feather I kept

For years but had nothing it went with, a
Foreign thing; one copy of *Huck Finn*; 20 boxes
Of empty pay envelopes, a pseudo-sheep diploma.

There was talk of heartbreak via nerves; matter of fact
The autopsy was notable for the splendid greater and lesser aorta,
And legally bled I lay there in my own ice water.

But they missed the scrap of film—and anyway
Had no unionman, nor a projector if they'd had—
Of the girl running toward me forever through the cloversunned
field.

FINE MORNING

It is a fine May morning. Professor Arturo Esposito observes
it shyly at 8.40 in Providence, R. I.,

By leaving hatless for the campus and neglecting
His little twisted cigar. All this he recognizes. Or, spring is
strange everywhere

So even here it is meeting with a beautiful woman, new and
(perhaps) unattached.

Well, he is a 50-year-old exile with not enough hair and too much
belly, he says,

Remarking on the day to his colleague, Vicquart, whom he en-
counters at the corner.

Together they go up the hill along maple-dappled brick wall
and walk,

The meeting-house steeple shining below them. 'Look,' says
Esposito: 'even the pigeons shine.'

M. Louis Vicquart, recently of the Sorbonne and a discovered
Jewish strain, is young,

Is serious, is gentle, is correct, is immaculate in morning clothes
and a cane.

Esposito likes to make him laugh; Vicquart very earnestly wants
to oblige;

And though the Frenchman is tense as his wing-collar, and the
Italian's gaiety is unpressed,

Still, everything is O.K. Vicquart says always by way of ap-
plause: 'That is O.K.'

'Love moves the sun, et cetera, and only geese get moved by
goose-step—eh?

Imagine a General marching past those lilacs on such a morning,
Vicquart.

Flowers are just pretty—eh?—but why do they make so much
else seem half-wit?’

‘That is O.K.’ says Vicquart. ‘O.K., O.K., O.K.,’ sing all the
robins in international English.

The sun shines and the robins sing: and even three blocks away
at the corner by the tulip tree,

Because old Professor Heinrich Werner, bent over his beard
and pipe, pauses

Much longer than traffic requires on Angell street. ‘Everything
smells good,’ he says aloud.

‘It is not Heidelberg, but—no: It is not Heidelberg and
Everything smells good.’ And it does two blocks the other side
of the campus where

Vladimir Samolkin, the round, the gleaming, the Russian mathe-
matician, hums a bar

From last night’s Bach, smiles blindly past wistaria as if breath-
ing Bach alone.

So there they come: Esposito, Vicquart, Werner, Samolkin, into
the elm-laved campus sun,

As the bell starts for 9-o’clocks, and students leave the paths
to cross wet grass,

And all the dormitory windows are open, and voices loafing on
the early breeze,

Classroom doors all open. All O.K. All on a fine May morning.

Winfield Townley Scott

R E V I E W S

A HUMAN GOOD

Collected Poems, by Walter de la Mare. Holt.

WALTER DE LA MARE has long dwelled in one's consciousness as a fact of nature. He is always there. Whether one at first enthused, or later denied, or forgot, or remembered, he has been a permanent part of the landscape. A quality of permanence inheres in his work at its best. Analysis of this poetic reality would be a difficult matter, one which I shall not attempt. Many have remarked the fundamentals, the over- and undertones of his style; many have essayed his peculiarity and particularity; and I should do best to try to estimate his place in the history of poetry. But time has given him one; I should be only one guesser.

The bulk of this book is somewhat startling; here is the monument of a life-time of writing. Having taken de la Mare in small essences for so long, it is remarkable to see such a show of poems. He gains something in bulk. Another general consideration occurs, in that he remains chiefly a lyric poet, a writer of short pieces, there are several long poems in the book (as *Heresy*, *The Owl*), but these do not increase his essence. A further generalization is that he has produced no startling new forms, but has written, sometimes perfectly, in many old forms. A still further generalization, if negative, is that he offers to the consciousness of man no new way of thinking. He does offer a new-old way of feeling and it is the delicacy and somehow ghostly nature of his feelings which all have recognized as knowable, available, important, and valuable. Nobody would be

able to disprove the contention that there is a justice, and therefore a human good, in the kind of poetry de la Mare has been enabled to write. And, as one might suspect, although one is ever surprised by this sort of thing, there is a remarkable consistency in the writing despite the changes of the years. Again, he is an original in that there are few literary imitations or reminiscences of former writers in him. He has produced no school.

A more mysterious thing is this. Why will some short poems have and give off mysterious charm, while others will not give off mysterious charm? They may have charm, but not the mystery. Is it possible to analyze the unanalyzable? What I am asking is what makes some of his short poems "great," if that is the word *All That's Past*, *Arabia*, *The Listeners* and *An Epitaph*, to name some, are as good as they were. An answer might be found in the minutest examination of the lay of the words, a study of their very subtlest mental vibrations, but it would be simpler to say that as a practiser of lyric in hundreds of cases the divine fire of genius (or what you will) willy-nilly struck him when it struck. I might add that the survival of a poet given to explorations of the tenuous in reality, in a rough world, is matter for thanksgiving. The old fact remains that a "great" poem cannot be said in any other way, down to the slightest misplacement of a letter; whether or not any of de la Mare's poems are great, the best of them sit absolutely on a page.

Let others describe the orbit of his consciousness, name its limits, express its contents. Words like "sate," "Thou," "yon," "thridded" have been noted in the style. Let others compare de la Mare with his contemporaries of the tens, twenties, thirties, or forties. The fact remains that he has lived the life of the

spirit and that he has thrown off to view poems which speak for the nobility of man and against his grossness; that he is inimitable; that he cannot be discarded; that in poetry he is one of the enchanters.

Here, perhaps, in *Clavichord*, is the spirit of the man in four lines:

Hearken! Tiny, clear, discrete:
The listener within deems solely his,
A music so remote and sweet
It all but lovely as silence is.

Richard Eberhart

"SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

The Double Man, by W. H. Auden. Random House

One of the young Auden's most notable poems was a religious sonnet, addressing God with Emily Dickinson's directness as "Sir," and praying for "New styles of architecture, a change of heart." The significance of this poem was somewhat eclipsed by the fact that so much of his early work showed him as a rather naive Marxist and a decidedly boyish *épateur*. It strikes the keynote, however, for the extensive and pregnant piece which forms the body of his latest book. The new styles of architecture, which were so often his chief concern, have become less important to him than the change of heart. As the title indicates, he is sharply aware of human ambivalence, though it is of an intellectual rather than an emotional kind, and it is with painful cognizance of the difficulties involved that he demands that we set our house in order, substituting for a barren *ordre logique*, which cannot bring salvation, that *ordre du coeur* which promises the full fruition of sympathy and intelligence.

The poem is in the nature of a letter to a friend, and rambles on, as letters do, offering a happy example of free association. But it is governed throughout by the fact that the poet is pre-occupied with man's divided mind and interested in the achievement of integration. So that although he may wander into all manner of curious by-paths—and how many and how odd they are is attested by the voluminous notes to the poem—he never loses sight of the main road, and he comes out into the open at the end.

These notes, which occupy twenty more pages than does the poem itself (and that runs to over 1700 lines), are of doubtful value. Aside from the fact that the reader is distracted by being compelled to page back and forth as though he were reading a scholarly treatise, there is the further objection that the note is not seldom a gratuitous reference to a familiar quotation, or a slightly musty anecdote, or an exposition which does not explain. It is not clear why the essential matter was not incorporated into the body of the text, especially as many of the notes are already in verse, and the poem is furnished with a brief bibliography of its modern sources, which range from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* to Whitehead's *Process and Reality* and the Lynds' *Middletown in Transition*.

Its dubious construction notwithstanding, for a postscript should not exceed the length of the letter to which it is appended, the poem falls into three fairly well defined sections. The first serves as an introduction and concludes by stating Auden's personal predicament as a poet. He observes neatly that

The situation of our time
Surrounds us like a baffling crime,

and proceeds to work out this image with telling precision. Un-

der such circumstances, what can the writer do? He knows that

. . . language may be useless, for
No words men write can stop the war
Or measure up to the relief
Of its immeasurable grief.

Yet he hopes that his private communication to a friend, reaching a disheartened public, may renew its faith in those humane ideals by which, with the help of modest rations, men live. The second part of the poem is a disquisition on the evil forces that have put us where we are. Auden's Devil is not Milton's, nor even Blake's. He is the opponent, as he is also the creature and servant of that God to whom the sonnet mentioned above was addressed. He is, in short, "the Spirit-that-denies." He is also that state "Of fear and faithlessness and hate" which, when properly subdued, can "push us into grace." Not the least interesting passages of this section are those which deal with the distinction between sin and evil-doing, a distinction elaborated in the notes. The first is defined as acting consciously in defiance of necessity; the second as acting contrary to self-interest, and unlike sin, as inevitable, because our self-knowledge is not sufficient to permit us to do otherwise. Auden rests in the comforting reflection that the devil deals not in lies but in half-truths, which we can synthesize so as to illuminate our muddled world, and bring order out of chaos. Particularly to this part of the poem belongs the epigraph from Montaigne on the title-page: "We are, I know not how, double in ourselves, so that we believe we disbelieve, and cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn." The third and final part resolves the discords examined in the previous section. "O once again," pleads the poet, "let us set out,

Our faith well balanced by our doubt,
Admitting every step we make

"Sirs, What Must I Do To Be Saved?"

Will certainly be a mistake,
But still believing we can climb
A little higher every time,
And keep in order, that we may
Ascend the penitential way
That forces our wills to be free.

Condemning alike Plato's reliance on the elect philosophers and Rousseau's exaltation of the noble savage, confirmed in his belief that "Aloneness is man's real condition," he concludes that

. . . true democracy begins
With free confession of our sins . . .
And all real unity commences
With consciousness of differences.

The substance of the poem is, in fine, an analysis of man's divided soul, and an insistence that salvation lies in acknowledging our weaknesses, and in recognizing and loving the uniqueness of each individual.

In an early passage, speaking of the ideal audience that each poet sets himself, Auden confesses that his own is composed of Dante, Blake, the young Rimbaud, Dryden, Catullus, Tennyson, Baudelaire, Hardy, and Rilke, among others. In describing Dante he says that the great Florentine grasped the complex "Catholic ecology." One might say that Auden in this poem attempted to grasp the ecology of man in contemporary society, with special reference to the ethical implications of his survival. Auden has come a long way since he first dazzled his public with the exploits of an extremely clever and rather naughty boy, but he is not yet prepared for so ambitious a task as this. His adoption of the epistolary form allows him a good deal of leeway, and he makes full and effective use of it. Indeed, the poem might be described as an interior monologue intended to be overheard, centering upon the theme of an ordered mind in an ordered

world, which is also more or less the subject of the lively sonnet sequence at the end of the volume. It is nearly always interesting, not least as an instance of the intellectuals' trend toward religiosity, with its concomitant sense of guilt and desire for penance, though Auden wears his rue at different slant from T. S. Eliot. It is sometimes wise, often witty, and occasionally, especially when the passage has to do with music, delightful poetry, but it remains more engaging as ethics than as verse. A long poem made up entirely of couplets in iambic tetrameter palls on the ear, and when it deals largely in abstractions there is little room for imagery that will compensate for the lack of melody. One could wish that Auden had found a new style of architecture to house such pertinent ideas, yet one cannot but welcome so entertaining an argument for a change of heart.

Babette Deutsch

THE PROFILE OF A MASK

Poems 1930-1940, by Horace Gregory. Harcourt, Brace.

When a poet's work expresses a fixed position in relation to himself, to the materials of his experience, and to society at large, his critique is already half written: the poems, like filings under a magnet, make a design in relation to one another, and the design is self-explanatory. I have never read a review of Horace Gregory's work that seemed to me to succeed in pinning him down and isolating his conspicuous talent, nor do I feel competent myself to make so particular a dissection, because of the difficulty of ascertaining the position, as distinguished from the mood, of his creative ego. Since, as far as I know, no satisfactory critique of Gregory has yet been formulated, I suspect

that the poet himself must share the responsibility. A logical inference is that he has failed as yet to establish his poetic character. There is a final revelatory word that he does not communicate.

It may be worth noting that Gregory has practically ceased to write in the brief lyric form that served him so well in his early poems. One can still return to *Love Song: Twenty-Third Street* and *No Cock Crows at Morning*, not with the expectation of finding new values, for there is no richness of context, but with the confidence of pleasure in the controlled strong rhythms, the triumphant plotting of the lyric curve. The only comparable later lyric, *Through streets where crooked Wicklow flows*, is written in a borrowed and alien style, which does not prevent it from being bitingly effective. As we learn from the concluding eight-line piece in this volume, somewhat pretentiously titled *Daemon & Lectern & a Life-size Mirror*, Gregory does not want us to "explain that picture" or interpret its emblems:

Let us be glad that we cannot discover
daemon or child who made them, that these realities
of delight and beauty at their imperfect source
are indiscreet, if not indecent, subjects for any lecture.

Now one of the marks of the lyric poet is a compulsion to make his own myth of personality and to want to expose it, to show his mask. Without the myth there is no poet, only a series of poems. Gregory has, I feel been unable or, more likely, reluctant to meet that necessity, to confront his own person with that first terrible act of the imagination. The jacket of this book of his selected poems informs us, accurately enough, that "Gregory, possessed of a rich creative and critical heritage, has produced the violence of the contemporary scene almost as though it were a past." It is also true that he has sought to achieve this same

effect of distance in dealing with the materials of his own experience. Hence his habitual use of the dramatic and lyrical monologue. So ingrained is this convention that even when he is not writing in monologue he may introduce a secondary speaker to represent him, even a figure as remote, in a poem of contemporary Europe, as "the antique shadow of a whitehaired, white-limbed man." The almost inevitable result is a loss of immediacy. Some of his recent poems, particularly the group called *Among the Family Papers and Confessions of John Tapley Bluethorne*, carry this tendency of otherness to the point of affectation and preciousness. The farther Gregory gets from the heart of his mystery, the more he attempts to impose a ready-made pattern, however clever or charming, on his materials, the more elaborate and exiguous becomes his writing.

As a monologist, Gregory is reluctant to perform on a bare stage. He surrounds himself with props, drapes, devices (mechanical and rhetorical), which so engage his attention that they tend to become the actual materials of his poem instead of retaining a purely accessory character. *Bluethorne Wears for His Shield the Candid Eye*:

In sleep I almost hear
noise of lost cattle in a trampled field,
the husband's voice, the laughter of the bride,
brake-shift of motors through the park,
boy's cry and factory whistle,
the scream, the thrust of a body against the wall,
even in sleep's darkness, I know them for my own,
and if one held them as one might see them in a mirror
move, speak, tremble, dissolve and reappear,
they would be more than life itself and always there.

. . .

They stand between me and the unseeing, unlearned,
unknowledgable world.
I wear them as a man might wear a shield.

It is difficult to quote successfully from Gregory, because he is not an economical poet of consummate lines or striking images, or even of single poems that encircle him completely. His medium is expansive—to a fault, I believe—and his quality is pervasive.

By temperament Gregory seems happiest as an elegiac poet, celebrating, with his grieving rhetoric, the lost places, the lost persons, the lost world of his inheritance. In such lines as these that follow I feel that we come closest to the source of his creative energy and separate the strain that is his eloquence, his individuality, and his importance:

Her limbs are rivers flowing
past the town,
the plangent dream where the catalpas drown.
Goodbye, when voices greet another spring,
forgive our ashes and destroy the urn:
unwind the clock, empty the seasons down
rivers of memory—do not return!
Come home again next year, come home to sleep,
there will be changes, many names forgotten,
only those places in your heart remain the same

I have seen a review that dismisses the whole body of Gregory's work because it is not "casual" enough—as if casualness were the new Tenth Muse, lately sprung up in America! No worse suggestion could be made to a poet. Gregory is not and never will be a casual writer. To be sure, he has a strong sense of the contemporary, in both its historic and its idiomatic aspects, but to use the contemporary breezily, *au naturel*, is not his talent: he must work on it imaginatively and break it down into the deep, grave rhythms of his reflective spirit. Not

The banks are broken, Gas has fallen;
Consolidated Ice and Frigidaire
Dropped down Chicago River

but

And this is fear, fear,
The empty heart and the closed lung,
The broken song.
My classmates a republic of old men.

Except for the matter of concision, Gregory's problem is not one of technique. My final impression is that he has greater mastery of his medium than of his experience, and that he is reticent about revealing it; one feels at times that he is using poetry as a kind of mortar to reinforce a falling masonry. It would be better, perhaps, to admit the weaknesses of the wall, for with what shall the artist arm himself today save with his humility?

Stanley J. Kunitz

WHO ARE WE?

Return Again, Traveler, by Norman Rosten Yale Series of
Younger Poets Yale University Press.

It is not expected of a young poet to know continuously what interests him. Rather, it is in the nature of youth to seize upon objects, phenomena, ideas, as his own kind, when, often as not, they are alien. To know one's own fathers—how often we have been misled, how often we have served interests that really disinterest us, how often we have embraced a father who, in reality, is a stranger. How do we know who our father is? The father helps us to know ourselves, but prior to this wisdom we have to make a very wise act: we have to choose our father. Pascal understood it as the sensibility so enamored of an object that it magically takes it to itself. In *The Magic Mountain*, Castorp has such an experience when the phonograph arrives. But this is not the rule; for us today it is some unexplained magic. The rule is,

rather, that the youthful poet commits errors of identity, mistakes names, faces, lives. "Return to your fathers!" If it were easy not to be distracted, our poets and philosophers would not have admonished us so often.

The poetry of Norman Rosten raises a problem of this kind. The father and the stranger are both present but the father is small and the stranger large. Mr. Rosten is at his best inside a modest lyric. Essentially the poet is modest, reasonable, and has good sense. It is minor, but nevertheless genuine and exact; and in a world of megalomania where the poem is forever swollen through tedious vastnesses these qualities become positive virtues.

They buried the dead under trees
who were afraid of sea-burial.
And stories returned
of this land, and rare stones returned
and the yellow iron,
always returning
were stuffed birds with fiery wings,
the rough stones with rainbows in them
and stories of the earth's incredible curve.

But it appears too infrequently. This is the whole of the thesis: the poet mistakes his father and consequently doesn't know who he himself is. In the bigger efforts the theme is banal, the approach anonymous, the language so often used that it is no longer meaningful.

. . . if you slow down you're slowing a three thousand-mile-machine
I mean the u.s.a. brother
e.p unum
in god we trust
everybody else pays cash.

has been done too often. It no longer has weight or message.

. . . give her Ipana for the gums
and rub it in
(it's guaranteed)
I love you . . .

is wearisome and cliché. Whatever emotion or set of feelings prompted it have been entombed—and long ago, longer than the mere arithmetic of time. Patchen, in his first book, which he has left far behind, has done all this better. And there is Crane and Fearing. Rosten, in his embrace of the wrong body, makes Chekov's exclamation to his brother come to mind: "Brother," he wrote, "Smash the vodka bottle!"

We know that there is to be no revelation, no marvelous mystery revealed. But we also know that the immediate past is more dead (because the poet was more distracted) than more remote times. We must make a clear distinction between sincerity and honesty; only then do we stand a chance of re-stating ourselves, of stating our separate meanings and individual pulses. We stand a chance of knowing who we are, what our names are, what our faces mean.

One can say what he thinks Mr. Rosten is, but what he will become is much more important—certainly for Mr. Rosten. There is undoubtedly a sincerity in him and, in his more simple pieces, an honesty; there is reasonableness, sense and taste in his general design (somewhere within the excesses). But the application, the "minute particulars," carry Mr. Rosten far afield. And one wonders, finally, whether the poems in this book have much to do with poetry. Much of it would have been better as prose, a good deal of it something for which there is as yet no name, and that is not to minimize the gift and the general feeling in Mr. Rosten. But he has not yet an identity.

Harvey Breit

POETS OF THE NEW DECADE

Poems, by Leonard Clark. London: Fortune Press.

The Secret Field, by Christopher Lee. Fortune Press.

The White Island, by George Woodcock. Fortune Press

Letter in Wartime, by H. B. Mallalieu. Fortune Press.

Inscapes, by Francis Scarfe. Fortune Press.

These five English poets are all conscious moderns in that they assume habitually in their compositions the liberties of diction, metrics, and imagery which were won by several preceding generations of writers. One must admit, too, that they do not occupy themselves with the sweet old familiarities—death, nature, the mating of the species—to the exclusion of such impressive subject-matter as the odor and meaning of modern Europe. But to write poetry which is modern in this broad generic sense is, by this late date, merely to satisfy a minimal expectation of the reader; and poets before now have found their experience of profound societal change too moving and significant to ignore.

These, then, are no more than mild and preliminary virtues; and it is necessary to go further and see what a rigorous examination of the structure of specific poems will reveal. In one instance, at least, that of Mr. Clark, the preliminary virtues don't seem to become any less preliminary as one proceeds with analysis. Mr. Clark's metrics are free as could be, but they are co-ordinated closely with nothing in particular; perhaps they are a reflection, in their rambling irregularity, of the vague and shallow perceptions and emotions which evidently underlie them. The following poem, *October*, will serve for example.

The old voices of pines
whisper breathlessly into twilight.
The silver forest speaks a dream

to browning grasses,
oaks bare blackened boughs to the moon
Tread lightly here,
lest stumbling in golden avenues,
you disturb
a mystery
deeper
than birth

Why does the poet turn from the special variety ("pines") to the general agglomerate ("forest") and then back to the special variety again ("oaks")? Why doesn't he make the oaks say something too? Why are the pines communing with the twilight, but the forest with the grass? How can the forest be silver while the oaks are black? If the forest is silver, what are the "golden avenues" in line seven? Why is the scene lit by twilight in line two, and by moonlight in line five? It is a temptation to think of the last six lines as a commentary on the poem itself.

The level of these volumes, however, is not always so low as this specimen suggests. Mr. Lee manipulates his materials by and large with conscientious regard for their functional relationship to a consistent and comprehensible core of meaning. A fairly representative example is *March Evening*:

Pale peace of sky, pale sea
unintricate even in unfolding, simple
in rippled, wrinkled slipping on to sand,
porcelain green undarkened But below
faint edge, beyond rim, ridges of dark
destroyers, mines in sea-lanes,
stain of oil, wreck; havoc on havoc wrought;
yet untinged water, innocent horizon
of this still bay merge with untroubled sky.

In the last estimate, of course, this isn't much of a poem; the composition of the language is not especially distinguished, and the meaning is patent and conventional; but it embodies an

honest experience which has no taint of cooked-up mysticism or melodrama. Some of the poems from Mr. Woodcock's book seem fairly successful, too, although Mr. Woodcock's metaphor-making faculty would probably benefit from a certain kind of pruning and ordering of its rich profusion ("For in those crossed diagonals of the mind/ Breeds the event and bitter leaf of change. . .").

In some external respects Mr. Mallalieu is the most ambitious of the group. Many of his poems (*Lament for Osiris*, *Poem in Spring*, 1940, *To Edward Douse*) are impressively solid and big, in contrast with the suspicious brevity of most of Mr. Clark's work. And one aspect of their bigness is their preoccupation with the important social subjects of the time: the war, whither civilization, and so on. Unfortunately, in structure and composition Mr. Mallalieu's poems seldom fulfill the promise of their superficial mien. A strict reading of 1940 soon shows up, I am afraid, the basic looseness and artificiality of the metaphor which the poem pursues intermittently throughout its course, and upon which its dramatic excitement chiefly depends. The metaphor is a geographical one, and to begin with seems less than far-fetched:

Enormous continents lie dark ahead.
We voyage slowly, holding back, afraid,
Waiting a Nansen's or a Stanley's tread.
Africas of Time will not be spanned
Only by those who dare uncharted coasts . . .

Here the metaphor, by the poet's explicit definition, expresses the unknown and dangerous expanses of time which must be traversed by man in the new decade. (It might be pointed out in passing that a voyage of exploration is a willed act, whereas all men must move forward in time. The poet makes an obvious attempt to adjust his metaphor to this fact in the last two lines quoted, and in two unquoted lines following, but the fundamental ineptitude

of the metaphor is thereby only made apparent.) In the next stanza, however, which seems to press the geographical image after the manner of the metaphysicals, we encounter mention of "those, adventurous, who will record/ Whole *countries of the spirit* in their name. . ." Still further along, we hear of those "Who spending all on Truth have none to spare/ To wander through the *valleys of the mind*." Finally, the poet complains that we (man) "find no cape/ From which to sail, no faith to shift the task." This is nothing better than a feeble confusion, which the poet's high earnestness cannot disguise or counteract.

The best poems of Mr. Scarfe are also, I think, the best poems of the collection, although they constitute a relatively small minority in his book. I would cite *Conscript* as an example of a good poem which communicates considerable excitement and experiential illumination, and which gets its effect mainly from the operation of clearly and freshly conceived images, with the sharpening and enriching commentary of their full implications.

E. S. Forgotson

CONSIDERABLY HEALTHY

Special Laughter, by Howard Nutt. Press of James A. Decker.

About the publication of this unassuming but salutary book of verse, there are several circumstances which may seem to be unusual. For one thing, Mr. Nutt has not been widely published in the magazines, a matter, possibly, to his credit. For another, since he lives in Peoria, he is not a member of any close-knit writing fraternity of New York City, or of Chicago, or of San Francisco, say. He comes unattended but for a brief introduction by the novelist, Richard Wright, which is published in the form of a letter to the poet.

But he has come, for all that, freshly and solidly; and he will be heard. His isolation has worked to his advantage rather, and the fashionable poses and predilections of his contemporaries are generally lacking in his work. He has no overwhelming self-consciousness. He does not die daily of a withering malaise. His inwardness stops short of fantasy. He seems considerably healthy. His standards are his own.

This is not to say he steps full-blown into the arena without either influences or traditions. He has several, and they show both advantageously and again not. There is the little case of Eliot echoes, that familiar old complaint, in such passages as: "Take any Tuesday afternoon,/ Remarkable for nothing else,/ You'll find them here,/ drinking beer,/ Celebrating themselves." A bad start, possibly, for a poem with ambitious intentions; but the footwork is of the neatest, and after a while the punches have landed in sensitive places: "The folks it *really* pays to know,/ Butcher, baker, cannon maker,/ International undertaker,/ Cock Robber and Jim Crow."

Most apparent and most appreciable of Nutt's assets are the easy, "it's-a-breeze" style: "The insolence of those Good Doers/ Who lift us up to something lower"; the ability to employ American speech and turn old saws into acid lines. "The home town girl who got made good"; the uncommonly agile use of metaphor; and the talent for making a barroom phrase bloom resplendently with social meaning.

On the debit and dangerous side is a tendency toward superficiality. Today the satirist, unless he aspires to the intellectual integrity of a Kenneth Fearing or/and the aloof sensibilities of an E. E. Cummings, may find himself an Ogden Nash. Poems such as *Discovering Tuesday* and *No Pink Pills for Social Ills*,

however, challenge comparison with the best of Fearing and Cummings, which, in itself, is a tribute. Howard Nutt is one of the first poets of originality and promise to be introduced at the beginning of an uncertain and ominous decade. Of those who may endure the hazards of the next several years, Mr. Nutt's chances seem to be among the best, for his resources are those by which survival, if at all, is to be achieved. *Willard Maas*

NEW DIRECTIONS AND THE FORMAL TRADITION

New Directions, 1940, edited by James Laughlin. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.

In his preface to the 1940 edition of *New Directions*, Mr. James Laughlin describes his altered conception of editorial responsibility. He has, he suggests, come to emphasize "a sense of form" at the expense of "unrestrained, romantic expressionism." If we ignore the section on Surrealism (for whose inclusion Mr. Laughlin offers handsome apologies), we can observe the effect that this emphasis has had in setting the selections in the present volume apart from those in his earlier annuals. There is less of experimentation for its own sake, and fewer labors of self-love distract the reader from the actual poetry. The change has been by no means complete: we are still aware of young men who will not let us forget that they are interesting personalities shaped by rich and excruciating experiences.

As in Mr. Laughlin's earlier collections, the new direction is pointed in many fields, and within the specific fields themselves directions are multiple and necessarily ill-defined. The short story section gives an effect of homogeneity which derives from the fact that each of the stories is experimental without being

exaggeratedly so. Suggestively enough, the most successful story—Miss Eudora Welty's *Keela the Outcast Indian Maiden*—is the most traditional. Of particular interest to readers of *POETRY* is the inclusion in this section (why in this section?) of a puppet show in verse, *The Tower of Babel*, by Paul Goodman. Mr. Goodman profits by his choice of a highly abstract subject. (Although they contain a great deal of detailed information in the expository manner, Mr. Goodman's two short stories here do not indicate any real facility in realistic effects. *A Ceremonial*, which is by far the better of the two, succeeds precisely for the reason that realism, on the level that I have been considering it, is unnecessary in its structure.) His puppet show is distinguished by a close and functional relationship between his theme and its highly literary symbolization. In the studied flatness and simplicity of its verse and in its tendency to explore the literary occasion in terms of classic frames of reference (e.g. Marx, Freud), it is often reminiscent of Delmore Schwartz's *Coriolanus*.

The section of poetry is, on the whole, a mixed and disappointing affair—far inferior, for example, to New Directions' recent *Five Young American Poets*. Certain of the poems are unbelievably inept, and the better work appears unhappily out of place in such company. The outstanding item is John Malcolm Brinnin's *Heroes*. Mr. Brinnin has genuine powers of organization and a keen eye for detail; he can enforce subtle rhythmic variations within the strictness of the *terza rima* and make of metaphor something more than a pleasant ornament. I have a feeling that he has not yet learned to put to maximum use the speaker's character as a means of unifying the progression of imagery, but we have every reason to be grateful for his other generous talents.

Other exciting contributions are those of Lawrence Durrell, Joseph Shore, David Cornel DeJong (who is, however, not at his best here), and F. T. Prince. Oscar Williams has included one fine poem—1940 *Vacation*—but his other efforts are flawed by a habitual dropping-off into certain fixed syntactic patterns which, through their very automatism, give a quality of apparent meaninglessness to his metaphors. Examples would include: "a stilt of dimension," "the hide-out of the dollar," "the crusade of the lemmings," "the delicate birdbones of childhood," "the blowtorch of proximity," "a stake of changelings," "indigestion of curiosity," "forest of expectation," and "rivets of tradition." The list is by no means exhaustive.

It is but a step from Mr. Williams' performance to the Surrealist exhibit, a section which carries no doubt great historical interest. Nicolas Calas contributes an interview and an essay which attempt to define the aims and character of the movement and which together present a strange composite of brilliant insights, harmless posing, and positive nonsense—a composite which might be not unjustly represented by Mr. Calas' period: "We scream from the midst of the iconoclastic mob." The iconoclasm (e.g. "the decadent Russian baller") is easier to take than the screams (e.g. "Who cares about social morality?").

The creative work advocated by Mr. Calas' criticism is presented by means of a Pre-Surrealist and a Surrealist anthology. The first contains much striking material, including a magnificent, if imperfect, story by Kafka. The Surrealist selections, both as coterie writing and as attempts to reach the unconscious mind, might be expected to raise the problem of communication in its most extreme form. Actually, my most prominent impression was of an almost unrelieved drabness rather than of obscurity. But I should

like to make exception for some of the Breton and Aragon offerings and for a really outlandish poem by Michel Leiris (here I *was* aware of obscurity).

Two detailed and invaluable analyses of Surrealism conclude the exhibit. Herbert Muller contributes the first, an incisive and illuminating attack. In the second, Kenneth Burke betrays a certain characteristic casualness in semantic matters, but this perhaps is the price we must pay for the fertile analogies of one of our most fertile analogical thinkers. And it is possibly symptomatic of our age that the highest level of performance in this collection is maintained in the field of criticism. In addition to the work of Messrs. Burke and Muller, brilliant performances are turned in by Mr. George Orwell and Miss Katherine Anne Porter. Mr. Orwell, using the writings of Henry Miller as a point of departure, has attempted an ambitious survey of post-war literature. He seems unaware of most American writing of the past fifteen years; his method does not permit the close analysis of specific texts; and his predictions for the immediate future of prose fiction fall somewhat short of inevitability. Nevertheless, he has approached his problem with an objectivity and insight that brings the literary events of the peace decades into sharp and lucid perspective.

Miss Porter's contribution—a series of excerpts from her *Journal*—is significant not merely as sensitive criticism; it casts light as well on the workings of one of the really unique literary intelligences of our time. As an instance:

Certain writing friends . . . have told me that I lacked detail, exact observation of the physical world. . . . At one time, I was so impressed by this criticism, I used to sit on a camp stool and note down literally every object, every color, form, stick

and stone before my eyes, But when I
remembered that landscape, it was quite
simply not in those terms that I remembered
it, and it was no good pretending I did,
and no good attempting to describe it
because it got in the way of what I was
really trying to *tell*.

I have italicized *tell* because of my uncomfortable conviction that too many of the other contributors would, in a comparable context, have written *say*!

Morgan Blum

NEWS NOTES

WE are pleased to announce that the Harriet Monroe Award has been won by Muriel Rukeyser. The presentation will be made on June 4th at the annual dinner of the Friends of the Library, in Burton Court at the University of Chicago, on which occasion Miss Rukeyser has promised to speak and to read from her poems. The award carries five hundred dollars, representing the income from a special fund established for the purpose by Harriet Monroe. It will be given every three years to "an American poet of distinction or of distinguished promise" and of "progressive tendencies," to be chosen by a committee of three poets, preferably from different parts of the country, appointed by the president of the University of Chicago. The committee of judges for the first award, who voted unanimously for Miss Rukeyser, were Robinson Jeffers, Archibald MacLeish, and George Dillon.

The Pulitzer Prize for poetry has been awarded to Leonard Bacon for his most recent book, *Sunderland Capture*. We have greatly enjoyed some of Mr. Bacon's light verse, and we admire some of his earlier lyrics and sonnets, but we are unable to say anything, at the moment, about *Sunderland Capture*, because the publishers have not sent us a review copy. In fact, we have not heard of anyone reading it except (presumably) the members of the Pulitzer committee. Apparently Mr. Bacon and his publishers were taking no chances.

The twelfth season of the Writers' Conference in the Rocky Mountains will open on July 21st for three weeks with a staff including Hudson Strode (novel-writing), Wallace Stegner (short story), Edward Davison (poetry), Harry Shaw (non-fiction prose), Louise Seaman (juveniles), Witter Bynner and Mari Sandoz (special advisers). At the

end of the term, five scholarships to the 1942 conference will be awarded to members whose work has been outstanding; and the J. B. Lippincott Company, publishers, have announced that they will award a thousand dollar yearly prize to the author of the best novel written under Mr. Strode's direction. For full particulars address the Director, Writers' Conference, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colo.

The Writers' Summer Workshop of the University of Iowa will be held from July 9th to August 1st at Iowa City. The faculty will include Robert Frost, Paul Engle, Robert Penn Warren, Ruth Suckow, Josephine Johnson, Norman Foerster, Herbert Krause, Frank Luther Mott, Wilbur Schramm, and others.

A special feature of the Fourth American Writers' Congress, to be held in New York June 6th-8th under the auspices of the League of American Writers, will be sessions of panel discussions and "demonstrations" of American poetry, folk-songs, and music. The discussions will emphasize the relation of poets to the people.

The *Providence Sunday Journal* announces a weekly column of hitherto unpublished poetry and solicits work of high quality, whether traditional or experimental. The column is designed as a newspaper experiment and does not desire the "homey" type of verse. Payment will be made at space rates: \$1 minimum, \$6 maximum, per poem. Manuscripts should be addressed to W. T. Scott, New Verse, *Providence Sunday Journal*, Providence, R. I.

We are glad to hear that a new poetry scholarship is being offered by Texas Christian University, as "an experiment in the Southwest in recognizing poetic talent as an asset in college life." This university has gained a reputation for developing writers. The scholarship amounts to \$75 a semester and will be available in September for the new student who best meets the requirements. For full particulars address the Chairman, Department of English, T.C.U., Fort Worth, Texas.

Although Ivan Goll has not mentioned it, we should like to apologize for our recent lapse in referring to him as a "Swiss poet." Goll is one of the best-known contemporary French poets and is really of Alsatian descent—a fact we ought to have remembered because it has a definite relation to his work. His poetry has always been characterized by strong internationalism, beginning with the early *Canal de Panama*, published before the last war. (Somewhere he has written of the Alsace of his boyhood that it was like a draughty corridor full of opposing currents between France and Germany. "Qui de ma génération n'y a pas contracté une bronchite?") He and his wife, Claire Goll, the novelist, are now living in New York.

Richard Eberhart gave the Tufts Phi Beta Kappa poem on May 21st. The title: *A World View*. He has also recently made some recordings of his own poems (two 12-inch discs) which have been published by Harvard.

Alfred Kreymborg has contracted with Modern Age Books for the publication of his critical study and anthology, *The Poetic Drama* (the book for which he received a subvention from the Carnegie Corporation), and the sequel to his autobiography, *Troubadour*; while Coward-McCann and the Tudor Publishing Company are about to issue the second revised edition of his *Anthology of American Poetry*, containing 21 younger poets and bringing the selections up to the present year. In addition to all this, Mr. Kreymborg is preparing a book of poems.

Our congratulations to *The Saturday Review* (New York) on its "Accent on Poetry" issue, which appeared May 5th. This is its second special poetry issue in less than a year—a sign in itself of the marked revival of interest in poetry which Malcolm Cowley discusses in his leading article. In England, says Mr. Cowley, this is a time when readers, having little leisure for thousand-page novels, feel more than ever the need of the shorter, more incisive expression, the quick imaginative ordering of experience that poetry provides. And "one discovers that the admirable workmanship of a poem, even if its mood is sombre, somehow restores one's faith in the value of human effort" (Our correspondence with English readers and contributors would support these statements. In the current mail, for example, the London magazine *Horizon* orders a supply of extra copies because their old copies have become worn out from being circulated on loan. And a subscriber writes: "I read POETRY in bombshelters and it is the one ray of literary sunshine in an otherwise dreary life.")

Mr. Cowley expects the forties to be a much richer time for poetry in this country than the thirties, when "a great deal of American poetry consisted of private speech about public matters." Today, though the material of poetry is more likely to be personal, the method, he believes, is becoming *less* private—poetry is becoming more accessible to the average intelligent reader. Here he may be right again, if the steadily increasing circulation of this magazine can be taken as an index. But the most hopeful sign of a "poetry revival" is the quality of the work in our accepted file.

CORRESPONDENCE

IS IT CRITICISM?

To the Editor:

Contrary to my policy as it is, I feel I must take issue with Reuel Denney in his review of Raymond E. F. Larsson's *Weep and Prepare* [POETRY, March 1941]. In the first place, Mr. Denney evidently has no clear concept of Catholicism; he is apparently unable to separate in his

own mind the spiritual force from the material, physical Church. Fundamentally, that lacuna in his approach to the subject may be responsible for his other errors.

He accuses Larsson, first of all, of "indiscriminate imitation of MacLeish, Pound, and Eliot," but he does not offer to prove this loose charge. I do not think any honest critic of *Weep and Prepare* can go farther than to say that Larsson has been influenced by MacLeish, Pound, and Eliot, and this is quite markedly different from "imitation." When Mr. Denney writes, "What we desire from a Catholic writer is a feeling for the immediate and as yet unorganized resources which Catholics have on hand for facing and harmonizing the conflict between the church's broadly criticized philosophy and its ambiguous contemporary position as a stooge for anti-democracy," he is asking Mr. Larsson and any other Catholic writer to answer Mr. Denney's personal doubts and questions about the "church's ambiguous contemporary position," etc. Is this kind of thing criticism? Mr. Larsson very possibly has a great many doubts of his own to face without the necessity of considering the demands of Mr. Denney, whose statement reminds me of that famed left-wing criterion, i. e., if a book shows no social consciousness, it is simply not good. It comes down to this. Mr. Larsson didn't write what Mr. Denney thought he ought to have written. As both writer and critic, I cannot help believing that the author's intention should be the critic's first consideration, that the critic's expectations should never enter into the matter at all.

Not a word in Mr. Denney's review spoke of the music of Larsson's poetry, which I have been reading far longer than I have Mr. Denney's, nothing of Larsson's sense of form, etc. If Mr. Denney's review is criticism, its ineptness is outstanding; but I cannot see it as criticism.

August Derleth

[It seems to us that Mr. Derleth is surprisingly quick to question the honesty of a reviewer simply because he writes "imitation" instead of "influence." We are also surprised to hear that a critic is inept because he "expects" a distinguished poet to do something really compelling with his chosen subject. We think Mr. Denney might have said more than he did about the fine and memorable passages in Mr. Larsson's poetry (though he did say something), and we certainly regret our own ineptness in not catching the typographical error in the third line of the review, which should have read: "this may or may not appear explicitly in his work." But if Mr. Denney belongs to the over-expectant school of criticism, he is at least in famous company. Jacques Maritain, as Mr. Rago reminded us last month, has criticized Proust for not having 'the inner light of a St. Augustine'—and it may also be said of Proust that he never pretended to have—ED]

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

WALTER DE LA MARE, the celebrated English poet, has been a contributor since 1917. His new volume of *Collected Poems*, published in America by Henry Holt & Company, is reviewed in this issue.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT, of Providence, R. I., is the author of a book of poems, *Biography for Traman*, and was awarded our Guarantors Prize in 1935. He is on the editorial staff of the *Providence Journal*.

RUTH LECHLITNER, of Cold Spring, N. Y., has contributed often to POETRY and other magazines. She is the author of a book of poems, *Tomorrow's Phoenix*.

LOUIS ZUKOFSKY, of New York City, has appeared several times here and was the editor of our Objectivist Number in 1931. Mr. Zukofsky has spent five years on this first half of the ninth movement of his long poem, *A*. He uses the canzone form which, according to Dante, embraced "the whole art of poetry." The form appears only once before in literature, in Guido Cavalcanti's *Donna mi Prega*. 55 mimeographed copies of *A-9: First Half*, including notes, have been made for private distribution.

HAROLD ROSENBERG, the New York writer and painter, has been a contributor since 1932. He is at present an editor of the National Office of the WPA Writers Program in Washington.

JOSE GARCIA VILLA, of New York City, is a native of Manila who came to this country in 1930. He was introduced to our readers in 1932. Since then he has contributed to various magazines and has published a book of short stories, *Footnote to Youth*.

WELDON KEES, of Denver, has appeared several times here since 1938 and is becoming well known as a contributor of poems and stories to magazines. He is Director of the Bibliographical Center for Research.

KENNETH SLADE ALLING, of Wilton, Conn., needs no introduction to our readers. He is the author of a recent book of poems, *Core of Fire*.

With the exception of Mr. Hay, who has appeared once before as a reviewer, the following poets are published here for the first time:

CHARLES MILLER, a young writer of Jackson, Mich., has attended Chicago and Northwestern universities and is now completing his studies at the University of Michigan, where he has received two Hopwood literary awards. He has worked in factories and on wheat farms, and as cook, pattern-maker, chauffeur, salesman, reporter, etc. He regards himself as "a worker who happened to get through college—and when

Notes on Contributors

June 12th is gone by I'll be a farmer or a worker again." He contributed to the recent anthology, *New Michigan Verse*.

JOHN HAY, of New York City, was born in Ipswich, Mass., in 1915, and graduated from Harvard, where he was president of the *Monthly*, in 1938. He was for two years Washington correspondent for the *Charleston News and Courier*, and is now serving in the Army at Fort Jackson, S. C. He is a grandson of the poet-statesman.

DEAN JEFFRESS was born in Berkeley, Calif., in 1913, and is now doing graduate work at the University of California. This is his first publication outside of college magazines.

EMILY PORTER ST. JOHN, of Pasadena, Calif., has sent us no biographical information.

Of this month's prose contributors, all but Mr. Forgotson have appeared previously:

RICHARD EBERHART is on the faculty of St. Mark's School. He has recently published a new book of poems, *Song and Idea*. BABETTE DEUTSCH, of New York, is well known as poet and critic. Her latest book of poems is *One Part Love*. STANLEY J. KUNITZ, of New Hope, Pa., is the author of a book of poems, *Intellectual Things*. HARVEY BREIT is a young New York writer. MORGAN BLUM, of New Orleans, has been doing graduate work at the University of Chicago, and is now serving in the Army at Camp Davis, N. C. E. S. FORGOTSON is a young Southern poet and critic now studying for his Ph.D. at the University of Iowa. WILLARD MAAS, of New York, is the author of two books of poems, *Fire Testament* and *Concerning the Young*.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE.

A Letter From the Country, by Howard Blake. New Directions, Norwalk, Conn.

The Paradox in the Circle, by Theodore Spencer. New Directions.

A Man Arose, by Cecil Roberts. Macmillan Co.

Three Moods, by Arthur Inman. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Canada Speaks of Britain, by Charles G. D. Roberts. Ryerson Press, Toronto, Canada.

Wind in the Elms, by August Derleth. Ritten House, Philadelphia.

The Archbishop Sails for Rome, by Willis A. Boughton. Kaleidograph Press, Dallas, Tex.

Dark Interval, by Cosette Faust Newton. Kaleidograph Press.

[Continued on next page]

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

- Ritual*, by Adelbert M. Jakeman. Falmouth Pub. House, Portland, Me.
Periphery of Time, by Christine Hamilton Watson. Fine Editions Press, N. Y. C.
Thoughts, by Ida E. Redmond Fortuny's, N. Y. C.
Il Prisma, by Stewart Barr. Independent Music Co., N. Y. C.
Stepping-stones, by Gertrude M. Weybrew. Banner Press, Atlanta, Ga.
Whence Come the Winds? and Other Poems, by Milton J. Goell. Dynamic America Press, N. Y. C.
Rabbit No. 202: Illusions and Conclusions, by Homer Wheelon. Priv. ptd., Seattle, Wash.
Jouer de tout, by Jean Rivier. Les Feuilles de l'Îlot, Rodez, France.
Cold Tongue, by Denis Glover. Caxton Press, Christchurch, New Zealand.
Recent Poems, by Allen Curnow, A. R. D. Fairburn, Denis Glover, R. A. K. Mason. Caxton Press.
Who's Zoo in the Garden, by Charles Palmer and Jean-Marie Putnam. Greystone Press.
Verse 1931-1938, by Clayton Stafford. Alan Swallow, Albuquerque, N. M.
Impromptu Verse Historical, by H. Carolyn Forsman. Fortuny's, N. Y. C.
Stalks of Wind, by Hazel Barrington Selby. Bruce Humphries.
Strange Alchemy, by Eunice Mildred LonCoske. Driftwind Press. No. Montpelier, Vt.
Coal Dust and Crystals, by Eunice Mildred LonCoske, Henry Harrison.
These Small Songs, by Margaret von der Linden. House of Field, N. Y. C.
There Is No Spring, by Evelyn Hudson Rowley. House of Field.
Curfew and Caravel, by Mark Wayne Williams. House of Field.
Comments: Poems, by Harry Trumbull Sutton. Bar D Press, Siloam Springs, Ark.
In My Mother's House, by Ann Nolan Clark. Viking Press.
Travelers of the Plains, by William P. Sockman. Priv. ptd., N. Y. C.
Church Without Walls, by John Harsen Rhoades, Henry Harrison.

ANTHOLOGIES AND PROSE:

- Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, by Raymond Thompson Hill and Thomas Goddard Bergin. Yale University Press.
Young Voices: A Book of Wells College Verse, edited by Richard Armour. Wells College Press, Aurora, N. Y.
The Philosophy of Literary Form, by Kenneth Burke. Louisiana State University Press, University, La.
American Renaissance, by F. O. Matthiessen. Oxford University Press.
Baudelaire et la Belle aux Cheveux D'Or, by Albert Feuillerat. Yale University Press.
The Fugitive: Clippings and Comments, collected by Merrill Moore. Priv. ptd., Boston, Mass.
Jonathan's Apotheosis, Vol. I, by John Harsen Rhoades. Priv. ptd., N. Y. C.

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

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SEVEN POEMS

HOSPITAL

INSIDE or out, the key is pain. It holds
The florist to your pink medicinal rose,
The nickname to the corpse. One wipes it from
Blue German blades or drops it down the drain.
The novelist with a red tube up his nose
Gingerly pets it. Nurse can turn it off.

This is the Oxford of all sicknesses.
Kings have lain here and fabulous small Jews
And actresses whose legs were always news.
In this black room the painter lost his sight,
The crippled dancer here put down her shoes,
And the scholar's memory broke, like an old clock.

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These reached to heaven, and inclined their heads
While starchy angels reached them into beds;
These stooped to hell, to labor out their time,
Or choked to death in seas of glaucous slime;
All tasted fire and then, their hate annealed,
Ate sad ice-cream, and wept upon a child.

What church is this, what factory of souls
Makes the bad good and fashions a new nose,
And the doctors reel with Latin and even the dead
Expect the unexpected? For O the souls
Fly back like heavy homing-birds to roost
In long-racked limbs, filling the lonely boughs.

The dead cry *life* and stagger up the hill;
But is there still the incorrigible city where
The well enjoy their poverty and the young
Worship the gutter? Is Wednesday still alive,
And Tuesday wanting terribly to sin?
Hush, there are many pressing the oak doors,

Saying, "Are boys and girls important fears?
Can you predict the elections by my guts?"
But the rubber gloves are deep in a deep wound,
Stitching a single heart. These far surpass
Themselves, their wives, and the removed goitre;
Are, for the most part, human but unbandaged.

KARL J. SHAPIRO

PHARMACY

It baffles the foreigner like an idiom,
And he is right to adopt it as a form
Less serious than the living-room or bar;

For it disestablishes the café,
Is a collective, and on basic country.

Not that it praises hygiene and corrupts
The ice-cream parlor and the tobacconist's
Is it a center; but that the attractive symbols
Watch over puberty and leer
Like rubber bottles waiting for sick-use.

Youth comes to jingle nickles and crack wise;
The baseball scores are his, the magazines
Devoted to lust, the jazz, the coca-cola,
The lending-library of love's latest.
He is the customer; he is heroized.

And every nook and cranny of the flesh
Is spoken to by packages with wiles.
'Buy me, buy me', they whimper and cajole;
The hectic range of lipsticks pouts
Revealing the wicked and the simple mouth.

With scarcely any evasion in their eye
They smoke, undress their girls, exact a stance;
But only for a moment The clock goes round;
Crude fellowships are made and lost.
They slump in booths like rags, not even drunk.

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SNOB

At what time in its little history
Did on the matrix of his brain a blow
Fall that struck like a relentless die
And left him speechless; or was it by degrees
That the algid folds of mind, caught in a pose,
 Hardened and set like concrete,
Printing and fixing a distorted moment?

Nothing but death will smash this ugly cast
That wears its trade-mark big upon its face,
A scutcheon for Greek-letter brotherhoods
Where it is weakly sworn by smiles to cow
Unequals, niggers or just Methodists.

 His bearing is a school of thought,
But he is not funny and not unimportant.

MONGOLIAN IDIOT

A dog that spoke, a monster born of sheep
We mercilessly kill, and kill the thought,
Yet house the parrot and let the centaur go,
These being to their nature and those not.
We laugh at apes, that never quite succeed
 At eating soup or wearing hats.

Adam had named so many but not this,
This that would name a curse when it had come,
Unfinished man, or witch, or myth, or sin,

Not ever father and never quite a son.
Ape had outstripped him, dog, and darling lamb,
And all the kindergarten beasts.

Enter the bare room of his mind and count
His store of words with letters large and black;
See how he handles clumsily those blocks
With swans and sums; his colored picture books.
At thirty-five he squeals to see the ball
Bounce in the air and roll away.

Pity and fear we give this innocent
Who maimed his mother's beautiful instinct;
But she would say, "My body had a dog;
I bore the ape and nursed the crying sheep.
He is my kindness and my splendid gift
Come from all life and for all life."

SCYROS

snuffle and sniff and handkerchief

The doctor punched my vein
The captain called me Cain
Upon my belly sat the sow of fear
With coins on either eye
The President came by
And whispered to the lords what none could hear

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High over where the storm
Stood steadfast cruciform
The golden eagle sank in wounded wheels
White negroes laughing still
Crept fiercely on Brazil
Turning the navies upward on their keels

Now one by one the trees
Stripped to their naked knees
To dance upon the heaps of shrunken dead
The roof of England fell
Great Paris tolled her bell
And China staunched her milk and wept for bread

No island singly lay
But lost its name that day
The Ainu dived across the plunging sands
From dawn to dawn to dawn
King George's birds came on
Strafing the tulips from his children's hands

Thus in the classic sea
Southeast from Thessaly
The dynamited mermen washed ashore
And tritons dressed in steel
Trolled heads with rod and reel
And dredged potatoes from the Aegean floor

Hot is the sky and green
Where Germans have been seen

The moon leaks metal on the Atlantic fields
Pink boys in birthday shrouds
Loop lightly through the clouds
Or coast the peaks of Finland on their shields

That prophet year by year
Lay still but could not hear
Where scholars tapped to find his new remains
Gog and Magog ate pork
In vertical New York
And war began next Monday on the Danes

THE CONTRABAND

I dreamed I held a poem and knew
The capture of a living thing.
Boys in a Grecian circle sang
And women at their harvesting.

Slowly I tried to wake and draw
The vision after, word by word,
But sleep was covetous: the song
The singers and the singing blurred.

The paper flowers of everynight
All die. Day has no counterpart,
Where memory writes its boldface wish
And swiftly punishes the heart.

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MY GRANDMOTHER

Moves to my mind in context of pure sorrow
And as if apprehensive of near death, in black;
Whether erect in chair, indoors or out,
Her dry and corded throat harangued by grief,
Or bent at ragged book in Hebrew prayer;
Whether in sunny parlor or back of drawn blinds,
Or always, at last, in bed, her eyes sinking.

Though time and tongue made disparate any love,
On daguerreotype with classical perspective
I see what of her youth she hoarded for our hate.
I pity her life of deaths, the agony of her own.
But most that history like an obscene queen
Thrust her across the frontiers of all lands,
Taking her exile for granted, cursing her journey,
Confusing the tongues and tasks of her children's children

Karl J. Sha

PROWHEAD

Not fate alone fathers the generation of the brave,
but he is around, highly entertained, the sardonic
well-groomed gentleman with long nails,
impartially amused by the celestial or demonic.

So let him take the blame of the bitter brave
who curse him for their glory, wanting to curse whatever
it was that carved them down to the stubborn stone
of courage, made them heroes, they desiring it never;

Whatever it was that chose them for the terrible hour,
for the prowhead to breast fiery seas and monstrous oceans,
whatever it was that thrust them into the waves
of these years of incalculable currents and motions.

When out of the years' clay they wanted only to fashion
a little juggling god of laughter or passion,
why should it be they who move through the shattered house
in the dank dawn, through piled slate and glass and beams aslant—
why they who stoop (unconquered) to pick up
the shards of a colored bowl that held the kitchen plant?

Alice Monks Mears

CONSCRIPT

Kissing and oratory, the public orgy in the brazen light,
And flags, the clean wash of empires,
Hung out upon the crowded air,
And holy men dispensing benedictive speech,
Dilate our simple hate, our simple death,
Spread wide the rhetoric in colors of our blood,
Across the silent sun
Explode the bombast of our ancient sacraments.
These and the farewell bonfires on the beach at night
Inflate his tender make-believe, his simple fright.
The myth accumulating in transfigured air,
He dreams enormously and trembles there,
Ravished with bugles, sick for the flesh
Of girls and drunk with valedictory.

His house is built of thirty years. And when
Will he inhabit it again?
The knock is loud upon the door.
He has expected it for ten.
Now he who loved his three or four
Recalls the flesh he broke like bread;
This one is smiling clearly at the door, this one
Left by the west road, and one is dead.
And he remembers one in tears.
His house is built of thirty years.
These are the tokens he has kept:
Someone standing by the sea,

A village street, and twenty names.
 What shall he do with memory?
 That is the way you cannot look,
 The house you cannot occupy;
 For they have hung the air with flags
 And canceled out the private sky.
 The village with the windy bells,
 The way they sang and swung their hands—
 These are the way, the house, the joy;
 It is the flower death disbands.

II

But what is death, his mind repeats. Yes, what is death,
 precisely, now? It is
 The shadow of the sun. It is the breathless gardener, say,
 Who prunes the summer's mad excess.
 But what is death? Not public death—my death.
 Not murder, death. The pale rider
 On the horse. Mother of poetry, and quite a sleep.
 Or, she is empress of the dark eventual sea
 Which drinks the rivers where we drift.
 They used to call him angel,
 He is lunatic and brief.
 Pure anonymity, the host whom you will never thank—
 It is not something words can bear.
 But shut your eyes and stare.
 He knows the grave play of men
 Defining vainly what they dream,
 Till words and dream are one.

The sound of the dumb sea,
The silence of the roaring sun.

III

His mother sets the supper out,
Recalling what his father said;
He takes the curse his father bore,
The first born of the dead.
The old darkness howling in our bones
Looses the creatures for their feast;
Nor shall he find his peace till they
Lie down together, man and beast.
He does not mouth deluded words
For glory and her blowzy kiss,
But something in him cries aloud
And what he says is this:
Time welds a brotherhood at last—
Tell me I know that this is true!
What little faith still lights the will
Is less for those I serve than those
They send me out to kill.
We cursed the fools who made the wrongs,
The criminals to right them,
And damned the knaves who make the wars
And damned the fools who fight them;
Reaping what I never sowed,
Answering for lies I never told,
I give my yard of bloody ground
And honor worth its weight in gold.

If villains forge the name of truth,
Thieves teach their blind to pray,
Tell me truth driven underground
Will bloom another day.
Not all the words I ever learned
Could ever save my age;
But tell me once again the words
Survive the burning page.
Not swindled by the dulcet prayers
Nor practising the hero's voice
(Now no one good enough to fight
Has any but a victim's choice)
Not for the lies of murderers,
Whose death will be undone,
But lovers in the streets again,
Companions who will take the sun.
But a city they will call their own,
And who will build it fair,
Who see from this one brought to dust
Another written in the air.
In praises of the unarrived,
In lands where lies and guns have dinned,
Like seeds upon the doubtful air,
My faith entrusted to the wind.

Funeral speech:

No love redeems the life of living men
But man the murderer extols the dead.

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Summer will burn her skies away, and then
What dreams the leaf will kindle in his head.

Think what the arms that take us in farewell
Might fashion for the sick and living one,
And what in darkness all the dead would tell
The mortal begging in the squandered sun.

Peter De Vri

SPRING-PIECE

O scattered earth where winter had to pass,
Heavy with indiscriminating snow,
Rise in your perfect trees, your poised grass.

Exhume your will, and shape to rigid form
The leaves that rotted loosely in the ground;
Resolve the broken, yellow field-stalks, found
Creation here, inviolate of storm.

Let me take strength from you for my desire:
I seek my scattered self lost everywhere,
Fallow in sorrow, drowned. My mind can bear
Only the gathered and the forged-in-fire,
The fabulous blossom when the root is there.

Elda Tanasso

FOUR POEMS

FOR A SEPTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

They say that by the seventh year
The substance of a man has changed,
And other flesh than once was here
On other bone is now arranged;

That not a fleck of matter clings
To its same fellow, and the cells
That once were I have taken wings,
And all is new that in me dwells.

So am I neither, at this last,
The body beating like a drum,
Nor the same blood that crowded fast
Upon the heart when night was come;

Nor yet the labyrinthine brain,
Perceiving, then, how you were love,
And love was only you again,
And was too close for thinking of.

Thus now transmuted, what am I?
And since this body knew you not,
How does its yearning still comply
With the unaltered shape of thought?

And how, since all our yesterdays
Were in a year it never knew,
Does it in contemplation blaze
With the indwelling flame of you?

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CORPUS LUMINOSUM

This gentleman who was once an exciting
Adventurer bound always to some new destination,
Has become a respectable educator of young women,
A lecturer on that historical phenomenon, the post-war generation.

Yet there gleams from the eyes, there asserts itself in the mouth-
corners,
Something not altogether cremated by the fires of its own
evanescence.
Here is the carcass of a proud impetuosity,
Pricked out, sometimes, in the dark by a residual phosphorescence.

AN ANTINOMY

The heart being dead, the mind must carry on.
It is as if the shed skin of the snake
Should keep its motion and be still alive,
Possessing form and semblance—but were gone
The dangerous colors and the eyes awake,
And the slow coils that sudden death contrive.

But if the mind have ceased to body forth
The motions of the heart in copious Form—
When words have failed, and only time is kind:
What image then shall capture the true worth
Of that imprisoned, self-consuming storm,
The aimless lightnings and the thunder blind?

MILESTONE

The night I cried in Hannibal, Missouri,
It was summer and hot, and the long miles between
Me and my love, implacable as a Fury,
Severed us then—and ever intervene.

And years, too, intervening have not taken
The smart from any tear, the tear from the eye,
Except to outward seeming. When I waken,
The same day fills the same and changeless sky.

Myron H. Broomell

INDIAN BLANKET

The symbols on this rug recall
Forgotten gods and nations dead;
The thunder god in jagged black,
The lightning god in red.

That blue impersonates the sky.
They used a raveled woolen made
From pilfered coats of Union dead
To get the proper shade.

A legend and a moral creep
Through years to the forgotten loom,
While lost gods true appointment keep
In a suburban room.

J. S. Moodey

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F I V E P O E M S

THE TRUE GAIT

Walk beautifully, and beautiful
Your thoughts will be;
And roam beside you with a casual grace,
Alert and free.

Run not, nor sink too long to rest
On any day;
Lest the enchanted hounds curl up and sleep,
Or run away.

Walk beautifully, and not too fast
Though noon is bright;
For hounds must wander with a lazy speed
To find delight.

TOMORROW

Tomorrow is a field in drenched November,
And water from the wood-shed thudding down
Upon the matted grass which once upholstered
An earth now patched with grey and brown.

Tomorrow is a beach-house stripped, deserted,
And windows in the dusk that bear no light;
Tomorrow is a lonely woman listening
To waves that bomb the shore at night.

MARCIA MASTERS

THE RIVER

The river nudged the shore, faltered and tapped it;
Prodded its twists and changes; scuffed its marshes;
Poked weeds and pebbles, touching and rejecting,
Sightless and weary and forever tapping.

The river shrugged its way into the valleys;
Straggled past wharves, and limped into the city;
On every side now jostled and impeded,
It tapped, then shuffled on its way forgotten.

SOJOURN IN THE COUNTRY

My country cottage with its fluted roof,
Lime-colored, papery, like a lace-edged shelf,
Stands high and lonely on a weedy bluff
Where no one comes or goes except myself.
Within the mustard walls the crickets sing,
And drafts make furtive eddies at my head.
I lie and watch an agile spider swing
Upon his frail trapeze above my bed.
Though never quite so desolate, I thrive
On frost and wretched lamps, and feel secure
To be where trees and grass are thick and live
And even weeds are niched where they endure.
Here in this moss-green twilight, steeped with dew,
Is all the peace there is, except with you.

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LATE SUMMER

Death will be like late summer;
Summer, but never spring.
It will be beautiful and sad and still—
There will be birds, but birds that do not sing.

There will be endless sunlight
Inert upon the grass;
Breakers whose white recession leaves a hush
Languid as water-lilies, smooth as glass.

There will be quiet valleys
Blurred with the heat of noon,
Perfume of uncut fields and flowered-dust:
But never stir of breeze or rise of moon.

There will be windless forests,
Silence forevermore—
Except for that faint echo in the hills
Of sleepy thunder from another shore.

Marcia Masters

IF THE DIVER

If the diver poises,
Naked, white, and adolescent,
On his plank athwart the blue;
If bold flight breaks,
And bends, sun-silvered, toward a crescent
For the clean fall,
No curve is traced beyond recall;
It is a well-remembered clue
For us.

We, too, have shaken off the land
That sucks a root down through the feet
To bind a posture and repeat
The safe, old verticality of limb.
To dare was glory, and to swim
Along the bird-path in the sky,
To beat the primal hand
That clutched beneath, and fly
Our stroke, until our arc drew tauter,
Then swoop headlong toward fate,
Tender defeat of water.

Angelo P. Bertocci

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T W O P O E M S

PASTORAL, NINETEEN FORTY-ONE

I tell of the city . . .
I cannot quite forget:

Newspaper coaxes drug clerk's heavy eye.
He sees air raiders, screaming the headlines,
Terrorize long columns of pulp sky
With bombs and mines.
Clerk sucks a hollow tooth, splits paper wide,
Sees final golf ball skim last green inside.
Pleased with match winner, clerk drops news to curb,
Moves on, pants sagging like a loose adverb.
Bank teller, on leave from consumptive cage,
Passes, spurts accrued spit on front page,
Smearing prim indented tally-table
Of seascape set from dubious London cable.

I tell of the city . . .
I cannot quite forget:

Convention orator in lush hotel
Gesticulates the market parallel
To '29. O little soul,
The poor are oceans, and the oceans roll.

I tell of the city . . .
I cannot quite forget:

LE GARDE S. DOUGHTY

Florist-window—fluent slip of flower
Trying desperately its gentle power
Against the steel, the stone.—Pity.

I tell of the city
I cannot quite forget,
Not yet,
Among the clemencies of this pine hill—
Though rains make pianist fingers on the roof,
And very sound of music is the proof
Of the quiet, the still . . . still.

Perhaps the city never shall be forgot. . .

The mind may be serene,
Yes, and the hand serene.

The heart is not.

I LIE, THOU LIEST

Open the blue roundness of your eyes upon my voice. I turn
away,
So our eyes will not come together as day after day
They come. Too well we know such meetings of our eyes. . .
Look at my voice, at images that rise
Upon it. Look with the blue roundness of your eyes.

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Cloistral scuppernong leaves on this wallpaper.—See,
They are not native to you, not native to me.
Lies have brought us to this alien place;
To the secret beauty of this meeting face to face,
In this alien place,

Can you not see that honor at last is counterfeit?—
We will not steal a purse, loving honor **more than it**.
Bribe? Blackmail? Exploitation?—Never. We choose
Honor to these, for these are less to lose.
Each other we will not lose,

Great nations welsh for a jet of oil, kill for an ear of wheat.
Great nations *are* great nations because they cheat.
We, two corpuscles in a great vein, two threads in a great flag,
Only lie because we love.—Take this as cynic or wag;
And wiser the wag.

Weep that we lose honor; it is sin enough.
Laugh that we did not trade for a pinch of snuff.
This is our story; there is nothing to surmise. . . .
Now let me look again into your eyes,
Into the blue roundness of your eyes.

LeGarde S. Dougherty

T W O P O E M S

RISING MOON

I am at once the cup of the white lily
And the brown earth under
Standing against a tree and a black mountain
And the white moon thunder

Listen the end . . . listen the end of silence.
"Here" is a word for wait and a gray tether.
If you would come, there would be something broken.
There would be end of gray by a gold feather.

I am the faun, the doe, and the lone hunter,
And the lost bird flying.
You are at once the hurt and the last pleasure
And the long, long crying.

SONG FOR A SKIP AND A HOP

When we are young,
We are young for such a moment.
After we are old,
We are old for so long.

I have seen hold-your-breath beauty,
And young pines grow sturdy . . .
Very soon sturdy, and dark green from pale.

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But the church-stone-wall,
And the nurse in the village
Were old when I came;
Will be old when I go.

Esther C. Mullenney

POEM

If I should never see
the things I let my mind remember grow
and nothing take that memory nowhere,
and I should live the death-after-the-fact;
remember, someone dear, what is dear now
when I see you anticipate my act.

If I should never see
the puppet, twitching, talk into the lights
and adored words I made to rocket love
not move nor move the convert in the stalls
to tears I crystallized, remember all
the love I had to give Intone at nights,
"He has not died whom others' fear has killed
who willed to rear a beauty I had tried."

If I should die—
clumsy, unfinished thing,
the animal-angel only half-way there—
remember though you hold a broken ring
completion was potential in my care.

James Law Forsyth

THE BRIGHT PLAIN

This has been a day
luxurious and lulling and spun
like a long-linked spool of brightness from the sun.

This has been a day
like the first stanza: beginning rhyme
of the song-drift (da capo. da capo) of importunate time.

This has been a day
when life-long travelers through the glistening world
found air lavish: prodigal the landscape hurled

In glinting rock:
sun-lake and long legato green.
Joy was the way breath leaned

Like a fresh wind
into day, barely ruffling the grass, the landscape's ease,
leaving desire unhorizoned. the bright plain between
distant trees.

Charles Edward Eaton

FIVE POEMS

THE LYING WORD

Truth and lie by lip and tooth
Chase the face of every world;
Proud behind the probing eye
Is dream that throat throws out as word.
The ghost that jumps from dancing jaws,
Festive as creature crouched in a flower,
Pricks his tracks in plastic time,
For a future that fails with the falling hour.

Present and past pace in a vowel,
A consonant brings birth or death;
From womb to tomb is a letter's length
Where Capricorn can belt the earth.
Mouth's cavern mothers a brood of bright rats;
An alphabet of peace the tongue
Shapes to a shuddering treachery,
A carol with a death-bell clang.

The dead who died but yesterday,
The dead who yet dare to be born,
Know, and shall know this golden sword
That swings from the stump of the healing thorn.
But who can save us, who shall master
This mumming mould behind the mask?
The foetal fact that a gesture gags?
O what is this wind-shape word, this husk?

CITY

Abrupt, unfluid as an eagle's love,
Stone's frozen tumult rears itself from fields,
Housing from germ to worm the flower of faith,
The pock-patched beggar and the marble saint.

Here, Christ and Judas walk upon the stream,
The strict stone river, in their hosts;
Hard as a pauper's prayer, the stone tree shades
From tempest the unprofitable birds.

Here, the stern moment hides above the cloud,
Strange music shocks the hand of carven men
Who knew no symphony but song of stone:
"How will destruction fall," they beg, "how death?"

But, shut from terror and the toppling plinth,
Drugged with the dream of plover's scream on hills,
Two lovers stand, and from reaction's hand
Scatter humanity across the park.

THE DYKE-BUILDER

On the seventh day the storm lay dead,
The god who built the dyke strolled out to see
Blind men, blind windows, widows and the daft,
And the cracked shore carpeted with gulls.

On the ninth day no sunset red
Daubed the damp stubble: peacock blue, bright harmony

Of gold and purple laced the sky, and soft,
Ripe as a plum with joy danced the quick girls.

But on the eleventh day the dead
Looked from their priest-holes, seeing only sea,
And the green shark-cradles with their swift
Cruel fingers setting the ocean's curls.

LEGEND

There was a man
With a colored coat of rags
Who left his body and blood on a tree.
But the thieves at his side gave the bones to the dogs
And the black-thorn cock sang merrily.

The lads of the town
Drank down to the dregs
Then took a sharp axe to lop the tree.
But the thieves had been there first gathering logs,
And the black-thorn cock sang steadily.

One day at dawn
Upon their nags
Twelve tinkers came and their hearts were free,
For they cut twelve whistles from the knuckles of the dogs,
To bear the black cock company.

RUSTIC METAPHOR

I have seen winter's frail hand halt on the bud
 With the charm of a saint, and a serpent's wile,
 And the cow-patched path as warm with folk
 Whose garnished caps in festival
 Flew between eyes and the broken byre,
 And the dank straw mouldering from the roof.

I have watched, as I walked, in the boy's hard hand
 The fractured bird, the fruitless egg:
 In the innocent eye, the oaken step,
 And the dew-drop diamonds in his hair,
 Heart has discerned the disease of youth,
 Wild screams from the stairs in a lonely house.

These things are known as a knot is tied,
 As a pitcher breaks they are forgot:
 So the merry huntsman, red in the woods,
 Draws not his rein as the hare's heart breaks,
 But rides with a song to his father's gate,
 There to be gay with death's next guest.

Henry Treece

THE USABLE TRUTH

EDUCATION, as we know it, makes its gifts with an admonition: Use! Everything we tell you, the schools say, is to be absorbed in your lives. Every attitude is from now on your tradition. This is your equipment, with this we send you to your wars, wherever they may be, whatever they may mean. There is just this one learning, this one branch of your heritage, left. It is very precious, it is to be preserved—in fact, it preserves *us*, whole ages are given to us by its grace alone—but, although it is to be memorized and stored, it is not to be used. This, of course, is poetry. In a utilitarian culture, this one knowledge is to be taught as being Not for Use.

There is, under all the shouting in the country now, a deep silence. Statement is needed; not the signing of names to lists and statements; we have had our years of that, and those years may be contributing to the present silence. We want clear statements now. We know this earth of our learning is, rather than dust ground out of rock, the packed and leafdrift earth of centuries of falling lives, fallen under our feet, anonymous, the inarticulate centuries. In such times, or in times of cynicism, we may sign general statements—in the cynicism after wars, the cynicism that is nothing but forgetting, or else the wilful gesture that puts meaning out of mind. But these years are to be the years of belief. We have an aging generation of the other forgetfulness, but no one can doubt that on both sides of the Atlantic belief is up and raging in the sky. Battle of the sky, battle of belief! We will be fighting in our time for the air over countries, for the climate of the mind and the living principles in them. In the most shocking way, we see exposed, in

all of their efficiency, machines of fright; the form and content of fear; the trajectory of fear measurable in new hungers, new madnesses.

All our strength must be brought to resist these. Honesty, for which so many have called in the last years, is not enough. What strength we have must be developed with all our imagination and equipment. And here, as equipment, enters that attitude which has been given us, which we have been told we are not to use. The attitude of poetry, capable of facing the tragic, the complex, the fantastic, capable of meeting the process of reason that works, not in the single-track a, b, c, d of logic, but rather in the cluster-to-cluster progress of an emotional sequence moving from group to group of idea and feeling.

The attitude of poetry is the attitude with which we can face these battles. It is, indeed, much more. It is a technique that may provide the fierce and vivid spirit with its complexity, a many-minded resistance which we need today. For the present demands that. We have not only to resist whatever threat to our lives we may discover, but, in the knowledge of our tradition, to expand continually the limits to liberty that the present itself sets on us. The world we know and love with so much pain is in complex danger, and our safety is to insist on the values we know: values we knew, indeed, when the country itself was formed

This is our tradition. And if this sounds to you like so much dancing on the grave, I can say only that our life now—any age of life this earth produces— is lived in a rare and carnal dancing on the grave, the solemn beautiful dance over the home of the dead of the living mystery, the living truth. The dead have offered us lines of tradition, and emblems. We are free

to choose from among these. That is why I speak in anger against any feebleness now, and against an emblem visible in our times: the emblem of *pre-surrender*, with treaties signed before the battles themselves are fought, with writers imposing a censorship on themselves before the censorship arrives, with poets surrendering to formalism long before the necessities arrive to force disguises upon the arts.

We can remember all our pride now, all our truth—in Melville's phrase, "the usable truth." We in America breathe the air of possibility. Our obligation is at this point to hold fast, with all the faith and imagination we have, to possibility, and to whatever tradition we find there is behind our liberty and our communication, actual as a creative gift. The belief we want calls for communication. The usable truth! Sovereign, and free! But in what way can truth be used, between human beings, in human relationships? The only use of truth is its communication. And that is a tradition we may choose: the use of truth in its communication. It is a tradition to be fought for with whatever insight and poetry and power we can summon in ourselves. Tradition and possibility—and the possibility is: our lives. Very closely, our lives are all implicated. The next few months will cut through many levels of conflict, until the choice is made which will have to do for us, since we will have to live according to it. But if we can keep our own meanings continually alive—if we can respond to these fearful and complex facts which move in their systems, and which confront us now—if we can respond with insight, keeping open what communications there are, the communication itself may mean discovery. For there is a moment past the war to hold to, as well.

The age does fall away and change, the poetries do issue,

there must be vast destruction before all our meanings will be whole—but there is a world in view, and the hope for poetry is a hope for that world. A world in which truth is used, a peace in which poetry may live, as a person may live—a world in which the life of poetry will be the life of people. That flesh, that meaning, that song.

Muriel Rukeyser

"A TORCH IN THE WIND"

ON May 19th Lola Ridge died in Brooklyn at the age of 57, ending a career which began in 1918 when her first poems appeared in *The New Republic* and *POETRY*. She never had a very large audience, though some of her poems have been highly publicized, but the friends and critics who admired her talent did so with impassioned sincerity. On almost everything she wrote is the stamp of a fiery, uncompromising personality. Her first protests against social injustice came at a time when they could have been only the outcry of an individual; there was then no fashion for social poetry and very little precedent. *The Ghetto* was a powerful attack on the sweat-shop system and fell upon ears not yet deafened by thousands of such broadsides. It was, moreover, not the result of hearsay, but of actual experience in tenement and factory.

Lola Ridge suffered a pioneer's hardships of loneliness and struggle against physical ills, and their effect on her poetry was marked by angry, violent meters and images. *Firehead*, her long poem about the crucifixion, sounds as if it had been written in a series of birth-pangs, with writhing and pushing against the pain. At the same time she often appears to have made a fetish

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of pain itself — to have kissed the knife. Such a method is not very successful in convincing the sensitive ear, but it convinces the mind, and appalls it. In quieter moods she could produce music:

Dawn
Lay like a waxen hand upon the world
And folded hills
Broke into a sudden wonder of peaks, stemming clear and cold . .
I smelled the raw, sweet essences of things,
And heard spiders in the leaves
And ticking of little feet
As tiny creatures came out of their doors
To see God pouring light into his star.

One hopes that her lifetime of rebellion left her more than one such moment

J. N. N.

REVIEWS

ENGLAND AND POETRY

Poetry and the Modern World, by David Daiches. The University of Chicago Press.

POETRY AND THE MODERN WORLD is, so far as I know, the first attempt to give a consistent account of poetry in England between 1900 and 1939 and as such is quite a remarkable achievement. The method which Mr. Daiches has adopted requires that he consider the changing attitudes of the poets toward the various traditions of their art and the meaning of their accomplishment in its relation to the contemporary world. His book begins with a cursory survey and, on the whole, a conventional estimate of the Victorians; for Mr. Daiches is not so much interested in their worth as poets as in

whether or not they were able to come to terms with their age. In either case, they were to have their followers, and it becomes the critic's task to trace their influence, whether, like Tennyson, they can be conceived as having accepted the world they had to live in, or whether, like Hopkins, they remained secretly cloistered from it. Mr. Daiches begins with the nineteenth century at the flood in order to discuss its overflow into the twentieth century.

For the waters did not all recede at once. There were pools that lingered, in which the Georgian poets were content to contemplate the reflected calm of an English countryside, the twilight reflection of an English sky. Actually, the romantic contribution to English poetry was pretty complete by the close of the century. Nothing much was left of the tradition that had come down from the Romantics and been transmitted by the Victorians but its readers. For there is this to be said of the poets who had accepted that century which still wears an English name, they had made for themselves an audience. What is more, they had trained it in what to expect from poetry. If the Georgians found an audience, it was one the Victorians had made. They had not, perhaps, much to offer, but what they had was acceptable. The thirst of the reader for poetry was less than it had been. But his taste had not changed. He preferred the dregs of something to which he was accustomed to a new drink. The poets that came after the war could do little to assuage him.

They walked in the Waste Land and the living water they had to offer had been brought from far off. It was strange. The English found it unpalatable and bitter.

The young English poets who emerged in the late twenties

and early thirties of this century found themselves without an audience. They formed a group, but about them was a void across which their words did not go. "The disintegration of the audience for poetry—one aspect of the breakdown of common value criteria and the dispersion of public belief that we have several times referred to—" says Mr. Daiches, "meant that the poet was now faced with a very difficult decision: for whom was he going to write? The problem of determining attitude and finding an audience are not really distinct; once you have decided on the former, you will find that the latter has been decided for you" Presumably what Mr. Daiches means here is, that if the poet is capable of communicating socially relevant truths, he will secure an audience. And his truths will be relevant if his attitude is, as it should be, integrated and sound.

The rest of the book is taken up with an account of how the generation of Auden, Spender and C. Day Lewis faced these problems. And it is according to their success in solving them that Mr. Daiches accords his praise. This places him in the predicament of having to put C. Day Lewis before Spender and Auden.

For C. Day Lewis has done what Mr. Daiches would have a young poet do. He set out to understand the English tradition and interpret it in such a way that it would seem, not death, but life. It was too bad that his critic has to note that the writing throughout *Transitional Poem* is "somewhat loose, even at times sloppy." He proceeded to sing "in vigorous and triumphant language the flight of two English aviators from their own island to Australia." It was too bad that he did not see the irony of their taking off in "a tiny, obsolete machine." In the early 1930's, C. Day Lewis was full of confidence and revolution-

ary optimism. It was too bad that, before the decade was over, these had to go, giving way to bitter foreboding. It is really too bad for Mr. Daiches that he has constructed his book in such a way that it must come to its climax in a poet who is the very summing-up of mediocrity. For a poet, whatever he may do as a man, does not solve problems, either his own or the world's. What he does is to provide a resolution in poetry for problems which neither he nor the world can solve.

But to put it as I have done is not altogether fair to Mr. Daiches, who, if not a profound critic, is a careful one, whose judgment, so long as he is dealing with his own countrymen, is usually discriminating, often of an extreme accuracy, and always admirably set down. His discussion of the poetry of D. H. Lawrence, for instance, is excellent. "Lawrence's intensity and impatience led him to construct his poetry in such a way that the poem concludes at the point where most writers begin—with the achievement of an interpretation of the phenomena which are being described." This statement, with what follows, accounts as well as anything I have ever seen for Lawrence's power as a poet and the failure of that power in poetry. And who else has put so nicely into one sentence what ailed the poets who once appeared in Edward Marsh's anthologies? "With the Georgians the attitude was just sufficient to cover the subject matter."

Throughout the poetry whose history he is writing, Mr. Daiches is prepared to make us see the change in the conception of the poet's function: from the age of Tennyson, when, perhaps to Tennyson's undoing, the poet was conceived as having a public function; through the succeeding period, represented in England by Housman and Hopkins, when the poet had no choice

but to stand alone, all values for him dissolved but those of his art, all pride renounced save in his own integrity; then, after Eliot, after Yeats, the attempt of the younger left-wing poets to return to England and as poets to play a part in the modern world. And these changes in the poet's conception of his relation to the world correspond to as many attitudes on the part of the poet toward his art. "There are thus," says Mr. Daiches, "three groups—those who met the problem by limitation of the existing tradition, those who met it by going back to an older, long abandoned tradition and those who tried to create a new tradition." This is an interesting and serviceable scheme. But it will be noticed that the words are so weighted that all of Mr. Daiches's favors are bound to fall to the younger poets.

Now one can understand that the young poets of the left-wing, eager for action, should have turned away from what seemed to them in Eliot pessimistic conservatism and in Yeats a cold inhumanity. But the critic whose concern is with poetry and not with programs for action cannot do so with impunity. The fault in Mr. Daiches's scheme is that it does not properly accommodate either Yeats or Eliot. But then it is in the nature of schemes that they do not readily accept the great.

The word tradition occurs on almost every page of *Poetry and the Modern World*. But I am not sure that Mr. Daiches has pondered long enough on *The Sacred Wood* to have quite grasped the new meaning that Eliot gave that word. Or it may be that, as he half confesses, he is as an Englishman made uncomfortable by what seems to him Eliot's self-consciousness about the tradition. There is, he says, something "monstrously artificial" about it. One either has a tradition, or one has not; and if one has it, one does not talk, or even think too much about it.

Pound, who arrived in London some years before Eliot, had seen before him that English poetry was in a sad state of depletion and that the old unconscious approach to literature would no longer do. Eliot, with his pitiless lucidity, introduced some order into Pound's discoveries and then went beyond Pound. He saw not only the exhaustion of English poetry; he saw also the essential horror of the life-as-habit into which the unconscious traditionalism of the Englishman had led him.

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.

It was precisely that element of consciousness toward the tradition that Eliot introduced that later was to enable Auden to return to a purely English tradition and find there what none before Eliot would have found.

John Peale Bishop

THE POET AS JOURNALIST

New Poems: 1940. Edited by Oscar Williams. Yardstick Press.

It is the anthologist who must be judged, not the poets. The poets are so many pieces of shining metal in Mr. Williams' shield, so many moments of experience fitted into Mr. Williams' experience. "I have chosen many of the poems . . . because they seemed to me to be genuinely concerned with the unrest of our day, born perhaps in the midst of despair, but defining the problem, naming the incendiaries, and offering at times some kind of answer." This is Mr. Williams' point of departure. He adds, for his "key-note," George Barker's whimsical argument that all poems are elegies. Thus armed with funereal resolution, Mr. Williams has assembled what he believes to be the representative verse of the cataclysmic year of 1940.

"This is the year that must be memorable," says George Barker in a *Triumphal Ode* included in the volume. Unfortunately the year will be more memorable than its poetry. In times of high disaster the song that falls from the lips (if one has the heart to sing at such a moment) is drowned by the roar of guns; the artist yields to the soldier; creation gives way to destruction. The impression gained on reading *New Poems: 1940* is that Mr. Williams has found his poets in their moment of blackest confusion. Disillusioned, they wring their hands, offering only the faded embroidery of words to decorate the sad moment. Humor is thrown out of the window; this is not the moment for laughter. The singing lyric is replaced by solemn, lengthy and often bitter introspection; there is no brief summing up; the lament is often prolonged and painful. And what is this but poetic journalism, the chronicling of cursory emotion and confused comment on events too close to permit a wider view. If history and experience are the fabric of art, art must march a step behind history. Only the journalist tries to keep pace with the immediate, and his "records" are as transitory as today's front pages. The poems of 1940 will be written when 1940 recedes into historic distance.

Dominating these poems of the moment is indecision, anger at the defeat of life and beauty — "but there isn't any love, there isn't any love," wails Weldon Kees — and a certain plaintiveness expressed in the Prufrockian elegies of George Barker. John Berryman is bitter over Leopold's surrender; Lloyd Frankenberg finds that even the stars have been regimented and Wallace Stevens complains "we live in a camp"; Willard Maas tells us "we speak in myths, the meaning of which is death"; Frederic Prokosch, in an elegy, speaks of the "Strangle hold of

history," and Muriel Rukeyser, also in an elegy, of the "summer of betrayal," while the anthologist himself, draped in gloom, discovers "civilization . . . as dark as a wood and dimensional with things."

The anger is genuine, the hurt acute, the cries reflect emotions on the whole sincerely felt. The poets are writing, as Mr. Spender observes, "in a world running dark and turning cold," and there is little they can do except "keep writing to warm themselves and others." Yet one has a feeling constantly in this anthology that their collective grief and collective hurts, thus arrayed before the reader, do not represent a full coalescence of experience and art. The anthologist does the poets a disservice, however much he may stimulate the reader; for these fragments of poetic experience, written under the duress of war, placed in the body of the poet's work, assume their proper proportions; isolated from it and "anthologized" they may grossly misrepresent him. That is true in a sense of any anthology; but it is painfully true in this case where the poets have been harnessed to Time, as the newspaper is harnessed to the date on its masthead.

It has often been said that the artist should be *au dessus de la mêlée*, so that from his loftier position he may see with clearer eye and warmer heart. Writers who are in the front line of conflict — and therefore cannot see beyond its immediate issues — use too readily and too scornfully the epithets "ivory tower" and "literary pedestal" to describe their more aloof fellows. Mr. Williams remarks that "poetry has come off its pedestal and is using the stone of its base for sling shots at the flaming eye of Goliath." This picture of the Poet Militant is a pretty one; but he can hardly be the same person as the Poet Philosopher or the Poet Dreamer or even just the plain Poet. The Poet Militant

may find propaganda and rhetoric, doggerel and satire, better instruments for his cause; but these do not necessarily make him a better poet.

The contrast is brought home to us in this anthology by Mr. Auden's poem *September 1, 1939* and Mr. Robinson Jeffers' *May-June 1940*. Mr. Auden gives way to oratory; he is sitting in a 52nd street dive, the decade has been dishonest and he feels cheated and betrayed; "waves of anger and fear" circulate over the world whose people are "lost in a haunted wood"

But who can live for long
In an euphoric dream;
Out of the mirror they stare,
Imperialism's face
And the international wrong.

The clipped lines are made to be spouted rather than read. They possess the windiness of the orator and a touch of his hysteria; these maxim-like utterances, "there is no such thing as the state," "no one exists alone," "Hunger allows no choice." No one can question the legitimacy of Mr. Auden's anger; but it sears his poetic expression.

Mr. Jeffers is high above 52nd street. No darkened room, no intervening bar shuts out his light; his horizons are wide, the nerves steadier, the spirit serene. There is calm in his gaze, music in his words, sentiment and ironic solace.

Foreseen for so many years: these evils, this monstrous violence, these massive agonies: no easier to bear.

We saw them with slow stone strides approach, everyone saw them; we closed our eyes against them, we looked

And they had come nearer. We ate and drank and slept, they came nearer. Sometimes we laughed, they were nearer. Now

They are here. And now a blind man foresees what follows them: degradation, famine, recovery and so forth, and the

Epidemic manias: but not enough death to serve us, not enough death. It would be better for men

To be few and live far apart, where none could infect another; then
slowly the sanity of field and mountain
And the cold ocean and glittering stars might enter their minds.

It is in such instances, when the poet reasserts himself as poet, that he shines in this anthology, as he does in Richard Eberhart's *The Groundhog*, or the physical verse of Dylan Thomas, or the sharp clarity of Louis MacNeice, or the equanimity of Marianne Moore. And he is at his most journalistic in the poems of Mr. Williams himself, whose images burst like well-timed headlines, sharp, vivid, acute, but in effect, metrical editorials.

Leon Edel

IMAGISM AND INTROSPECTION

Love and Need: Collected Poems: 1918-1940, by Jean Starr Untermeyer. The Viking Press.

In 1915,¹ Jean Starr Untermeyer wrote fourteen lines of free verse which, to my mind, constitute the most beautiful poem produced by the so-called imagist movement. As imagist poetry aimed to do, her *High Tide* confined itself to sensory apprehension of a momentary experience, expressed by a single figure of speech. The tidal waves she represented as hunting-dogs springing with rough joy on the shrinking sand, then whimpering as they were drawn back:

And I saw how they were bound
With a broad and quivering leash of light
Held by the moon,
As, calm and unsmiling,
She walked the deep fields of the sky.

Not only does this poem realistically and consistently express

¹*High Tide* was first published in *Current Opinion*, February 1916.

the shape, sound, and movement of a tide under shafts of moonlight, not only is it in common-sense accord with science in its linking of cause and effect, but it fuses the classic conceptions of Artemis as moon-goddess and huntress in an image so fresh and convincing that the twentieth century poet seems, in a flash of intuition, to show the imagination of the ancient myth-maker at work, making its first association of moon-tides and hunting-dogs on the leash of a goddess. It seems incredible that Mrs. Untermeyer's image had never been explicitly used before, but I have never found it, either in ancient or modern poetry.¹

Mrs. Untermeyer's first volume, *Growing Pains* (1918), held nothing else to match this achievement, but the whole book was fresh, sensory, eager, young. In *Birth* the description of a young woman in travail had the precision and nobility of a marble sculpture. In *Autumn* a back-yard in "canning season" was presented with as lively visual arrangement as a Breughel painting. Definitely, the limitations of imagistic free verse suited Mrs. Untermeyer's genius. She alone perhaps ought to have taken to heart Ezra Pound's quaint pronouncement: "The future belongs to the imagists"

But unfortunately she began, in the 1920's, to announce her intention of progressing; she tried to keep step with newer fashions in verse-writing. Instead of describing momentary visions of the outer world so accurately that her poems seemed carved in rock, she began metrically to reiterate her *wish* to make her poetry rocklike.² Thus she has slipped back into the squirrel-cage which imagism was presumed to have freed poets from. Like the minor nineteenth century poets, she is nowadays devot-

¹It is nowhere, for instance, in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*.

²In *Invocation*, *Gothic*, *Clay Hills*.

ing herself to telling us about her fervent desire to be fervent. The sincerity of her fervor is indubitable, but as Mrs. Browning's Aurora Leigh reflected,

Many a fervent man
Writes poetry as cold and flat as tombstones.

Mrs. Untermeyer's claims to distinction in her recent poetry are her verbal coinages, her facility in rhyming, and her range of style. But her coinage, though seldom as egregious as her word *wholiness*,¹ are seldom justifiable;² her neatest rhymes³ merely attract attention as a slick exercise; and her varying styles serve only to carry one's thoughts back to the poet whom she is unconsciously imitating. Thus her best couplet,

My night and morning prayers to God,
Twin sandals wherein thou art shod,

inevitably recalls Rainer Maria Rilke's prayer:

I am the sandals of Thy bare feet⁴

Her figure of speech,

In my breast the delicate needle wavers

recalls Ezra Pound in pre-imagist mood:

Now, for the needle trembles in my soul⁵

Mrs. Untermeyer herself, with disarming candor, confides that jealousy is at the root of her behavior, saying of one contemporary poet:

The very sounding of her name
Contracts my throat like searing flame.
My heart beats heavy and too strong
As hidden tears exalt her song.

¹In *There Shall Be No Schism*.

²Other coinages in her new poems are *enserpented*, *untraiitor*, *wried*,

³Inner rhymes are neatly used in *Yonder Lebanon* and *Reply*.

⁴In the German the line is: *Die Samtsandale, die ich bin*.

⁵*The Needle*, 1912

She need not be ashamed of her emotion; Shakespeare himself envied "this man's scope and that man's art." But Mrs. Untermeyer has denied her own genius in her jealous and zealous imitations.

Fortunately, Mrs. Untermeyer herself once suggested the recipe for her cure.

How memory cuts away the years
And how clean the picture comes!

she exclaimed in her lovely *Autumn*. If only she would let her pictures thus "come clean," she might again write as she wrote then. So long as she retains memory which "cuts away the years" to her childhood, she still has the material which by their own testimony has sufficed Wagner, Baudelaire, Willa Cather, Thomas Mann. And she may gain hope by the thought of two recently dead poets whose memories of youth deserted them in middle age but re-inspired them in old age: Lizette Woodworth Reese and A. E. Housman.

Please be an imagist again, Mrs. Untermeyer.

Elizabeth Atkins

A LYRIC REALIST

Open House, by Theodore Roethke. Alfred A. Knopf.

The charges of obscurity and cacophony, favorite twin blasts from the double-barreled shotgun of conservative critics, cannot be effectively directed against *Open House*. Theodore Roethke's first volume of verse is the result of careful, methodical, and honest craftsmanship. Adverse judgment might be aroused, however, among the *Panzerdivisionen* of radical critics, but I feel that their attack would prove equally misdirected; all the poems in the book are lyrics, and a lyricist may, in even a stream-

lined age, be granted the prerogative of preferring a simple, traditional technique.

Some of Roethke's strongest qualities as a poet are manifest in the verses dealing with nature and the countryside, which are among the best pieces in the book. He handles his subjects with the singleness of aim and simplicity of approach essential to the successful lyric. There is no compulsion, no baroque embellishment. His language is natural and distinct, and, to quote one of Pound's early imagist precepts, he "uses no word which does not contribute to the presentation." In a series of three poems entitled *The Coming of the Cold*, he depicts the onslaught of winter by selecting simple details that, in writing of less perception, might amount to mere photographic inventory. Naturally, directly, he describes what he sees. He grasps the characteristic qualities of objects and with exactness of epithet makes his lines come alive. Though straightforward, his approach is also sensuous. The earth is in his hands and its odor in his nostrils—autumnal odor of pear, pungence of butternuts. The action of rain and sunlight fills his verse. Lacking the mystic overtones of a Frost or Coffin, Roethke yet has a mysticism of his own, of the senses rather than the spirit. He finds poetry even in Yeats's "things uncomely and broken"—a bat, weeds, the "antic grace" of a heron. He is, in the best sense, a realist.

Beneath most of the poems concerned with nature runs a sharp undercurrent of emotion. Frequently it is implicit, as in *The Coming of the Cold*, which arouses the desolation one feels on a gray day in winter when the air is filled with the expectant bite of snow. Occasionally emotion enters more directly, in a stanza, a line, or even a single evocative word that suddenly relates the natural scene to the human context. Appearance

curls back, like the outer petals of a bud, revealing the subjective flower within. *The Light Comes Brighter*, which describes spring in the country, concludes.

And soon a branch, part of a hidden scene,
The leafy mind, that long was tightly furled,
Will turn its private substance into green,
And young shoots spread upon our inner world.

The expression of an inner world gives impact to Roethke's work. It adds depth to his pictures of the natural universe and is given more immediate form in the considerable number of poems concerned with the individual, with the struggles of the mind and heart to understand, express, and resolve themselves. "My doors are widely swung . . . My truths are all foreknown," he declares. So, in his verse he candidly distills the essence of emotional experience. The implications of fear, anger, and hate provide a sort of cerebral backdrop for keen subjective awareness. Yet there is never any extravagance. Action is more often suggested than described; and though his method may be indirect, delineation is always as economically precise here as when he writes of a summer orchard. It is his power of eliciting a mood or a sudden wave of feeling that constitutes Roethke's chief distinction, for a faithful portrayal of genuine emotion is always an original creation.

Unfortunately, his technical range is rather limited. What he plays he plays well, but he has not yet ventured into resounding counterpoint. He overuses the quatrain, the octosyllabic line, and iambic meter. His cadences could be made more lilting by a less restricted use of caesura and by experimentation with metrical irregularity. One trusts that his future technique will show greater boldness.

However, in spite of occasional rigidity of structure, hardly a verse in *Open House* is flaccid or insipid. Its poetry is one of sinew and verve, in execution no less than conception. Even the group of humorous pieces indicate an irrefragable sincerity. He speaks from the heart, where, as Coleridge said, the best lyrics are always conceived. Moreover, his thoughts proceed from a philosophy of fortitude. He has suffered deeply and known frustration and antagonism more often than joy or fulfillment. Like most sensitive persons he has found life a lonely experience. There is only one love poem in the book; and among the few pieces addressed to others is the nostalgic lyric beginning, "O my sister remember the stars the tears the trains."

More than once the earth has shaken beneath Roethke's feet, if only when, on bright mornings in early April, he felt the breaking of spring. But pain, while at times adding a leaven of resignation to his sentiment, has provided an intrepidity that may prove indispensable to his growth. For against our two perplexed worlds of economic upheaval and personal confusion has now been thrust a world of chaotic brutality. If, in the midst of these, the lyric tradition is to survive, the poet will certainly require such strength as *Open House* reveals. I hope it will be sufficient to enable Roethke to surmount the necessary change to militarist ideologies of the present and to build within his house some shelter where now and then quietude and peace can hear his voice.

The brave keep undefiled
A wisdom of their own

The bold wear toughened skin
That keep sufficient store
Of dignity within
And quiet at the core

Louis Forster, Jr.

PILGRIMS IN FOUR SPHERES

Proud Universe, by Sydney King Russell. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
Core of Fire, by Kenneth Slade Alling. League to Support Poetry.
Five Times the World, by John Russell McCarthy. Decker.
New Journey, by Sydney Salt. Decker.

In reading Mr. Russell's volume the going is easy but the rewards are not great. The old familiar subjects are here, handled in the old familiar way. There are the usual offerings of pastel lines to Nature, Silence, the Sea, Et Cetera; yet, for all his "bright intervals," "bright sorceries," "bright pilgrimages," and "bright expectancies," the universe of things written about does not take on the vividness and fresh luster that in reality are theirs. Mr. Russell writes too easily. He speaks of Loneliness in a vague and unfocused way that doesn't recall her anatomy even to one who knows her well.

In the first sixty pages of *Proud Universe*, the few poems like *Girl in the Subway* (which is simple, direct and poignant) embarrass the facile others by their conspicuousness. It is in Part IV that one finds Mr. Russell at his best, in the ballads. One of these, *Nocturne*, the description of a plain girl's aching, desperate need for love, is the best poem in the collection. Such poems indicate that Mr. Russell has good stuff in him. The many facile shopworn others lead one to doubt that he will shape and develop it.

In *Core of Fire* Kenneth Slade Alling has maintained an enviable level of quality. As the reader turns each successive page his respect for Mr. Alling grows. There is a remarkable compactness and a completeness to these forty short poems. And there is an effect of inevitability, the cause of which is not easy

to determine. *Gulls on a Rowboat* will serve as a typical example:

On the moored rowboat's gunwale perched,
As motionless as morning there,
Were seven gulls whose silence searched
The silent air.

Oddly I saw them so rescind
Their purposes here side by side
For gulls were made to wed the wind
And boats to marry with the tide.

Nothing very profound there, you might say. No, nothing very profound; and yet the poem is as effortless and complete as a work of nature.

None of these poems overflows a single page. The least successful, *Rainbow*, is also the longest, twenty-seven lines. But it is not a bad poem: it would not seem mediocre but for the quality of the others. Mr. Alling's mine is not a large one but his vein is surprisingly rich and he has worked it with skill.

The new books by John Russell McCarthy and Sydney Salt are composed of single long poems. The first of these, Mr. McCarthy's *Five Times the World*, is, in the words of the author, "the story of a boy and girl who live, with their small tribe, near the Big Trees." And "the time is perhaps fifteen thousand years from today." It is a narrative, interesting enough and readable, but in the main it is prose, not poetry. There are too many passages like:

The day was over. Leaving the lodge in their order
people began to gather in little groups

and not enough lines, in total, like these:

Jon looked at her eyes, at her out-thrust breasts with tiny
berry tips, at her slim firm belly above
the brown and spreading lichen that ended childhood.

Throughout there is a naturalness and a clean healthfulness that are engaging. Mr. McCarthy writes as a mature well-balanced man; he has substance and a simple warmth. But this is not one of his best performances.

Sydney Salt's latest book is, of course, about Christopher Columbus, but it is Columbus as navigator of spiritual deeps rather than as explorer of corporeal spheres. The author's purpose in writing the poem was "to find the poet as well as the discoverer; and in so doing . . . to come upon the man." He has succeeded in portraying a fine and strong character. This Columbus was a lonely man; he typified all creative men (i.e., all men) in that he dreamed new worlds and new journeys, in that he had faith and vision. He had seen the New World before his eyes saw it. He was ambitious not for himself but for the race of men. And he believed in them:

I loved God much,
but always near me was the challenge of that love,
the proof of loving — man.
They bore with me in my faith,
and they bore with me in my fever;
we shall not be known for our lusts and joys together,
nor our hardships together,
nor for the sharing of all simple things—
only for our belief in each other.

Mr. Salt's idiom is well-suited to his subject. It has a sea-cadence, and an expression clear, strong, and pervasive. In his *Epilogue* he writes of the "new journey" of mankind, across the star-lost limbo of our time, to the splendid New World of the future:

Ahoy, haul in the flowers,
days are drawing near!

Troy Garrison

NEWS NOTES

AN invaluable service has been performed by the new quarterly *Accent* in compiling the bibliography, *American Poetry: 1930-1940*, which appears in its current issue. This is a listing of the most notable books of verse which have been published in the past decade, together with a survey of American poetic drama, anthologies, poetry criticism, poets' biographies, and related British and Continental writing issued in the United States. It is carefully indexed and annotated, with information about the publisher, price, and present availability of each book. The selective nature of the list may be judged from the fact that it includes 264 books by American poets (about 3000 new books were listed in *POETRY* during the same period). More than one-third are first volumes. The work of each year is grouped together, so that this bibliography becomes an interesting summary of ten years' production. As the editors point out, it "demonstrates the remarkable increase in poetic activity as the decade progressed—talk of a 'poetry renaissance' in the late 1930's is not groundless."

Our readers may be interested in the names of the publishers of the 264 outstanding books and the number of titles credited to each one:

Macmillan (31), Scribner's (15), Farrar & Rinehart (14), Harpers (14), Harcourt, Brace (13), Holt (12), Knopf (11), Random House (11), Alcestis Press (9), Yale University Press (9), James A. Decker (8), Liveright (8), New Directions (8), Viking Press (8), Houghton Mifflin (7), Coward-McCann (6), Doubleday-Doran (6), Covici (5), Dodd, Mead (5), Bruce Humphries (5), Oxford University Press (5), Cape & Smith (4), Appleton-Century (3), Putnam (3), Arrow Editions (2), Centaur Press (2), John Day (2), Duell, Sloan & Pearce (2), Dynamo Press (2), Golden Eagle Press (2), Objectivist Press (2), Parnassus Press (2), Ritten House (2); and with one book each: Boni, Brewer, Cassowary Press, Caxton Printers, Crowell, Dick, Dragon Press, Duffield, Dutton, Equinox, Helen Gentry, International Publishers, Kaleidograph Press, Little Man Press, Madison Lane Press, Edwin Valentine Mitchell, Morrow, Prairie Press, Primavera Press, Signal Publishers, Simon & Schuster, Harrison Smith, Smith & Haas, Stackpole, Tryon Pamphlets, Writers' Editions.

One feature of this survey which will be particularly useful to all students of modern poetry is its listing of "the most substantial and penetrating reviews" chosen from American magazines over the ten-year period. The publications referred to, together with the number of reviews cited in the bibliography, are as follows: *POETRY* (104), *New Republic* (47), *New York Herald-Tribune Books* (38), *Nation* (27), *Southern Review* (21), *New Masses* (12), *Hound and Horn* (10), *Kenyon Review* (8), *Saturday Review of Literature* (7), *Partisan Re-*

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view (6), *Symposium* (6), *Accent* (3), *Bookman* (2), *Virginia Quarterly Review* (2), *Yale Review* (2), *Living Age* (1), *Modern Monthly* (1), *New York Times Book Review* (1).

The sixth annual Writers' and Readers' Conference will be held at Olivet College from July 20th to August 2nd. This year's staff includes W. H. Auden, Glenway Wescott, Katherine Anne Porter, Joseph Brewer, James Laughlin, Glenn Gosling, Nannine Joseph, Lillian Lauferty, Leroy W. Snell, and others. For information address the Secretary of Conference, Olivet, Michigan.

New Directions announces a new poetry competition for places in the 1941 edition of *Five Young American Poets*. Again this year the anthology will present the work of five poets under thirty who have not previously published a volume of poems with a national publisher. Each poet will be represented by approximately forty pages of verse and by a brief essay about his or her work and conception of the nature of poetry. Publication will be on a royalty basis, with advance. The editors of New Directions will serve as judges of the contest, and all manuscripts should be sent to them immediately at Norfolk, Conn. (return postage must be enclosed). Manuscripts need not be exclusively lyric in character. Verse plays, narrative poems, or translations will be considered.

We regret an error in make-up on page 155 of the June issue which caused three excerpts from separate poems to be run together as a single passage. In the quotation beginning "Her limbs are rivers flowing" there should have been a space and a row of dots after the third and seventh lines.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor

May I offer a word of thanks to you for having printed W. T. Scott's excellent analysis¹ of the disease of intellectual dry-rot that now afflicts so many younger poets? After all, poetry—like every other human art—is the reaction on the part of a living organism to living material. These young "neo-classicists"—far from the freshness of approach that alone constitutes true classicism—have been provided with so many theories, theses, rules and prohibitions by their academically minded teachers, that as Scott says, they "assume the attitude of resignation to doing something other than they really admire." It is all very well

¹*The Dry Reaction*, by W. T. Scott, *POETRY*, May 1941.

for them, or their mentors, to protest that they possess the loftiest critical standards; but the art of writing is—as Ezra Pound said long ago—a constant struggle to communicate, not a constant struggle to abide by the professional negatives of established academic criticism. Communication is important, and all these poets seem able to communicate is their distaste for any effort that has not been already made in previous ages. In regard to that, one must say finally: Better the living embryo of a human being than the mummy (cadaver, confederate or not) of a god.

John Gould Fletcher

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

KARL J. SHAPIRO, of Baltimore, was introduced in the October 1940 issue with a group of poems which has attracted unusually wide notice. He is serving at present in the 5th Medical Training Battalion at Camp Lee, Va.

PETER DE VRIES, of Chicago, has contributed poems and stories to many magazines and is the author of a recent novel, *But Who Wakes the Bugler?* He has been on the staff of POETRY since 1938.

HENRY TREECE is a young English poet of Irish-Welsh extraction. He is the author of 38 *Poems*, published in London by the Fortune Press, and of a forthcoming book, *The Dark Stranger*.

LEGARDE S. DOUGHTY, a former newspaperman, lives in Augusta, Ga. He has contributed often to POETRY and other magazines.

MYRON H. BROOMELL was born in Boston and now lives in Urbana, Ohio, where he teaches history, Latin, and Greek in the Urbana Junior College. His poems have appeared in this magazine and elsewhere.

ALICE MONKS MEARS was born in West Chester, Pa., and now lives in Hudson, Ohio. She appeared here for the first time last November.

ELDA TANASSO, of Harrison, N. Y., has been a contributor since 1937.

J. S. MOODEY is a graduate student and teaching assistant at the University of California.

The following five poets appear here for the first time:

MARCIA MASTERS, a native and resident of Chicago, was formerly on the staff of the Chicago *Times*, and is now doing experimental work in poetry and dramatics with the first four grades of the Faulkner School. She is the daughter of Edgar Lee Masters.

CHARLES EDWARD EATON was born in Winston-Salem in 1916 and graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1936. He has done graduate work at Princeton and Harvard, where he studied poetry with Robert Frost, and is now giving courses in literature and the

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

writing of poetry at the University of Missouri. He has contributed to leading magazines.

ESTHER C. MULLOWNEY was born in Canada of English and German parents. She received her M.A. last year from the University of Pennsylvania and is now chairman of the English department in the Downingtown, Pa., High School.

ANGELO P. BERTOCCHI, a native of Italy, was educated at Boston, Harvard, and European universities. He is now studying at Columbia on a leave of absence from Bates College, where he is Associate Professor of French. He is the author of a book of verse, *A Tale That Is Told*.

JAMES LAW FORSYTH, a young London writer, sends his poem from a Scots Guards training camp. The allusion in this poem is to a verse play by Forsyth which would have been produced by the Old Vic except for war conditions.

This month's prose contributors have all appeared previously

MURIEL RUKEYSER, of New York City, is one of the best-known American poets. The essay printed in this issue was read by Miss Rukeyser in acceptance of the Harriet Monroe Award for Poetry, at the University of Chicago on June 4th. JOHN PEALE BISHOP, the distinguished poet, novelist, and critic, lives in South Chatham, Mass. His volume of *Collected Poems* was published by Scribner's this year. ELIZABETH ATKINS, of the University of Minnesota, is the author of *The Poet's Poet* and *Edna St. Vincent Millay and Her Times*. She has recently published a novel, *Holy Suburb*. LEON EDEL, a Montreal writer living in New York City, was introduced in our recent Canadian issue. LOUIS FORSTER, Jr., is on the editorial staff of *The New Yorker*. TROY GARRISON, of Los Angeles, has appeared twice before as a poet

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Poems, by Ridgely Torrence. Macmillan Co.

Illinois Poems, by Edgar Lee Masters. James A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.

Hourglass in the Mojave, by Ruth Forbes Sherry. Wagon and Star, West Los Angeles, Cal.

Earth Shadows and Far Horizons, by Cynicus. Wetzel Pub. Co., Los Angeles.

Boadscea, by Robert Reynolds. Poets Press, N. Y. C.

ANTHOLOGY:

Victoria Poetry Chapbook. Poetry Group, Canadian Authors' Assn, Victoria, B. C.

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author of 'Workers in Fire', will accept a limited number of poems for private criticism and advice. She was recommended for this work by Harriet Monroe, has contributed verse to many periodicals, and been an executive of The Poetry Society of America for nine years. Inquire of Margery Mansfield,
M O N T E R E Y , M A S S .
XX

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Edited by Cyril Connolly

THIS magazine was planned months before September, 1939. The War sounded the death-knell of so many cultural magazines in England, widened the gap which *Horizon* had intended to fill and made its publication all the more necessary. When Desmond MacCarthy wrote in the *Sunday Times* 'The appearance of *Horizon* at this time is an event of importance . . .' he spoke for thousands of readers. The magazine had an immediate success and its circulation grew steadily until the fall of France and the advent of the Blitzkrieg. . .

and in 1941

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Press Comments

THIS is a review which ought to be supported—T. S. Eliot in *New English Weekly*. Altogether *Horizon* is a model of what a monthly review ought to be—*New Statesman & Nation*. The determination and creative energy with which English writers face and analyze the tremendous struggle that has been forced upon their country are impressive and heartening to watch—*Decision* (New York) in an Editorial on *Horizon*.

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P O E T R Y

A M A G A Z I N E O F V E R S E

VOL. LVIII

NO. V

AUGUST 1941

ODE

*Written at the request of the Irish Government on
the revival of the Tailteann (Irish Olympic) Games*

EMPYREAN is the source
Of indomitable will.
God the runner to his course
Holds, and urges on until
Lips and face of blood are drained,
And the fainting limbs are numb
Till the heart, by God sustained,
Bravely to the end is come.

By the Conflict is revealed
In a runner what is best;

By the struggle in the field,
By the speed which is the test,
By the speed that wears him down
Till the spirit alone can bear
Limbs that stagger for the crown
And the thunder in his ear.

Where are they who ran before
Under Tara's wide-eyed steep;
And the chariots that tore
Parallel the ridges deep?
Where are noble man and horse?
Ah, they both have lost the rein;
They have circled in a course
Tara shall not see again!

Aye, their hands are empty now,
And the green earth clothes their hill:
Gone the glory from the brow
And the sudden shout is still,
Blown upon the wind away
From the land that no man knows,
Folded in the earth are they,
And the grass as freshly grows.

Herald: Silence now and hear the King!

KING LEARY

We are, as our fathers were,
Lovers of the swift and strong,
Lovers of the open air,
Lovers of the horse and song
And the glories of the voice
In the deeds to be retold.
Therefore let us now rejoice
As the kings rejoiced of old.

Room enough for Peace is here
On the green and shaven swards,
For the pitching charioteer,
For the grave contending Bards,
For the young men in the race,
For the stately sport of dames,
For the maidens fair of face.
We have opened Tailltean Games.

Herald: The King of the South. Be listening!

THE KING OF THE SOUTH

King, we have come to this noble place
From the mountainous south of the narrow bays
Where, isled in grass, the short oaks grow,
Their low leaves wet by the tide below,

Where the golden sea-weed is lodged and low
Till the tide returns as smooth and bland
As the tremulous path to Fairyland;
And the moon at night renews the track
With a ladder of light on the waters black:
A misty land that is poor in flocks,
Of tender valleys and heartless rocks,
Where stout lowlanders, and, wild, without fear
The deep-breathed runner, the mountaineer.
King, we will try on your plain of Meath
Who may in the running be left to breathe,
As the circling race draws near its close
And our men, reversing their way with foes,
Fly from each other along the track,
Who may for his running the prize bear back.
Our Bards will sing so the Dead may hear
In their green duns watching from year to year
The Summer come with its grasses tall
And, after a longer interval,
The sweet youth ripen to women and men
To love, to challenge, to glory; and then
The green earth laps them, and, all too soon,
They join the watchers within the dun.
We are come, O King, where the games are sped,
To share life's crown with the still-foot Dead.

THE KING OF THE WEST

Where I come from, King, the skies
Are less colored than the land;
And the wildest winds that rise
In their clouds are moist and bland.
If you climbed a mountain peak
When the sun has just gone down,
And the sea's without a break,
Heaven from sea could not be known.

Islands shimmer after dark
Floating in forgotten gold,
Islands reached by no man's barque,
Islands poets' eyes behold.
And I bring my bards to try
Who may conquer in the course
Where the wing's too slow to fly,
Where none may prevail by force.

THE SONG OF THE BARDS

What should follow Sport but Song,
And the victor but renown?
Many men are brave and strong,
But if Courage strive unknown
And no poet make it sweet
With the words that rouse the dead,
Even better were defeat:
Who will men forgotten heed?

We can drive a host that wars
With the long embattled years:
Time gives ground when in the cars
Poets are the charioteers.
Beauty vanishing like Spring
We can rescue and respite,
Raise her from Earth's shadowing
Up into perennial light.

We can walk the reddened path
In the slipperly wake of Conn
Rouse the Hundred-Battled wrath,
Bid him stay or tarre him on.
We can tell of queenly joy
Underneath the trysting thorn,
And the anger of McRoy
When the wooden sword was worn.

We can sing the noble horse
And the wonder of his race,
Showing how supernal Force
Turns to Courage, Speed and Grace:
For he sprang from soil and surf
Where the ocean weds the loam;
And he thunders on the turf,
And his speed gives back the foam.

While we hold the Shield of Song
Stands the lineage of Kings;
And our buckler against wrong

Louder than MacNessa's rings.
Loveliness we can renew
Unrestricted by its date,
And the brave man's death undo.
We can bend the neck of Fate.

Now from prairie, hill and bush
Which gigantic rivers drain,
Streams whose single-handed rush,
Like a Chief's, puts back the main,
Come the old heroic race,
Men whose names are with us still,
And we hail them face to face
In the Games of Strength and Skill.

Where the blue eye beams with light,
Where there is the open hand,
Where the mood is dark and bright
There is also Ireland.
Welcome, Brothers, and well met
In the Land that bids you hail:
Far apart though we be set,
Gael does not forget the Gael.

Oliver St. John Gogarty

SEVEN POEMS

RESIDENTIAL AREA

Prevailing winds in this area blow
The fume of life away.
The mesh bag carriers when they go to shop
Can look around the day.

A ceiling blue maintains a working breath
Of ozone in the street,
And blinds blow inward with a birdy note
Of sun complete.

However, three or four months out of the year
Prevailing winds abate,
And the smoke of interest enters
Closet however strait.

Today is such a one. Some off in the smoke
Keep the miles dim.
And some at home bake black enough for the kids
when they get there
Bread of the brothers Grimm.

OUTSIDE

Ever saw sidewalk uninterpreted?
This is one.
The Rialto sidewalk with environs
Makes no sense.

What does it give sea legs after a sea picture?
Gumpapers.
What does it give spurs after range riding?
A slippery basement tilt.

Any other sidewalk fits the foot,
Takes in and out of doors and miles away
Any number of acknowledging steps,
You lead, I follow,

I take you up on that.
But this cementy floor makes no legitimate offer.
It extends for the night flight survivors
To alight, not awake, but walk over.

CHILDE

That brood upon a point, what fixes it,
What behind the brow has and rejects,
What munches hard and looks not at all,
Is that you, Pedro?

Yes I. Munches. Yes I, it is I.
What's here, not morn in spring,
Not Fulton Mountain at the backroad,
Not a lark up and about, no mesquite air

False fronts here though, those I see, those deliver
Themselves up to be thought on.
Now sour ribs, off and out of here.
You see clear enough where enough and what for.

Pedro Yes I do. Yes I see, and go.
Look how the false fronts settle
Down in the dust and contain themselves
Sufficiently, as the saddle takes its rider.

DEWEY AND DANCER

Cambises King, the Mexican bandit, slew
The thunder in a dance.
Such a stompstomping, such a thruthrusting, such a spit,
That it were you
He slew

Dewey, would he see the half-hundred thunders killed,
The pack of parries,
Would call it art, so violently responded;
You and again
Slayer and slain.

But would he call it thunder dying really,
Really really really?—
So, as in tropical and Mexotique storm,
The growl at the line of lightening lapses down,
In every single field
Lying killed

MIDWEEK

Plentiful people went to the Cadillac drawing,
 My ticket was number nine seven two seven one,
 And my friend's ticket was number nine seven two seven two,
 Certainly a lucky number and easy to remember.
 I thought of it all through the film, and I like Greer Garson.

O heaven when the lights went up, the table trundled in,
 The number called didn't even begin with a nine.
 There wasn't even that much respite of hope after the happy
 ending.
 That is the kind of change the brave buckle
 Time and again to.

All those people heart-rent and rustling,
 I wished the upper lights would not look down so,
 The curtain not so aquamarine, the manager not in tuxedo,
 Me not so pale. I wished the second feature
 Dark and dreadful.

ODE

Jake's store past Pindaric mountain
 Over the wash is the only place in a day's ride
 To get odes at except close to Mesa City side.

He has one glass a dusty one there
 Full of blue green and orange odes sticky but o k,
 And many come by on that account that way.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Scramble down off the hot flats, swallow a lot of universal wind,
Hear that lone freight pushing around sandy acre,
And they need for the slow swipes one green jawbreaker.

A slug of sweet, a globe of a barber's pole,
A suck of a human victory out of a crowd,
Sugared, colored, out of a jar, an ode

WHAT FOLLOWED

In all happiness and peace of mind
The man spoke a villainy, he was sore at it
And would have it back but it was gone already,
Ducked in the pool of the past and there no diver,
It was done for and he with it, he said.

But the very villainy got up of itself,
It was so light it ran, and he after it,
Asking everybody as he ran where it went to,
All had seen it and spoke of it to him,
They knew him by it.

When one summer eve in another county
He met up with the villainy at a band concert,
Asked how it did, said here am I
My whole life and place of life changed by chasing you,
He found he held its leash, it was his seeing eye
Purchased and instructed.

Josephine Miles

THE PHEASANT

Orchard and garden clutch the shoal
Of fog that crowds and overwhelms.
The proud cock pheasant takes his stroll.
He surfs his wings by the dwarf elms.

He struts the mud with arching throat
To peer through what is closing in.
He blasts the wall—a double note
That makes the echoes ring again.

The drawn world sweats in murk; it has
A wave that turns the woodlands pale.
The raindrops tap on soggy grass,
And on the pheasant's glossy tail.

The pheasant strides a garden nook,
Parting what dampens every feather.
The house looms near. He wants to look
At what has shut the air together.

His fears like paths have been erased
On the wet floor where nothing shows
The sky of fog is to his taste,
And none dares dream of what he knows.

Daniel Smythe

TWO POEMS

TO KEEP AND NOT TO KEEP

Soon laying aside the new skill
Foreknown, well-learned, once-used;
Eagerly (not easily) by brain and will
Learning the next, or the two fused—
Forget it, spend it, give it away.
All excellent. But yesterday.
This not of skills only, and thought, true,
But of love also to keep love new,
And of shrewdest hope for this mankind.
Such getting and spending make us wise;
Fresh-welling and brimming in the mind;
Young a long time in the hands and eyes.
Otherwise, have and hold is well.
Ought not new life be lived in peace
Putting down roots in one country till
Our neighbors and generations increase?
Keep what can be carried like a coin,
The much in little; wisdom's chart,
The appetites, the seed in loin.
Not possessions, but the wit, the art,
The will to live well anywhere,
Being our own sky, and storms in air.

THE PRAISE OF POETRY

It was never meant for any who read, not write,
To hear it aloud, crazy and honest,
Or in golden language crying from famous books,
Or spoken simple and cold
In the old, the common, the family light
To friends with their wary wiry looks.

O spare the silent the sound of words.
Keep poems about poetry, keep delight
In verbs nouns adjectives out of their sight.

The poet growing in love alive alone,
And wild with words,
Knows the truth suddenly always known.
His life means writing the poems:
This height in the bright room late, this rage:
Rhyme ready, and put quick on the page,
Narrow and clean, music and meaning one,
And the thing done. Read that.

As for who cares how or with what
It was written well, and when, and why—
Poets care, as all men care who wish not yet to die.
Praise poetry to them.

John Holmes

THE PAST IS A FOREIGN PORT

The Past is a foreign port, we said . . .
Move into it slowly now
With your heart in your eyes like a figurehead
Fixed intent on the prow.

Warp silently into the yielding dock,
Listen, listen again
For the awful sound, the delicate shock
Of the speech of living men.

Weigh your anchor, throw your rope,
The doubly twisted strand
Woven of longing and of hope
To tether you to the land.

The fabulous folk are unaware
Of you who are their creature,
You mingle with them free as air,
A figment from the future.

And you will find your magical way
As if you were reading a story,
Abroad in the early, incredible day
With terror and with glory;

The sun above you in its prime,
And on your face the weather
Roughened with the grains of time
And timelessness together. . .

LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL

The Past is a Place on an antique shore,
You will know the curve of the coast,
It will come back to you more and more,
You the ghost.

Louise Townsend Nicholl

LONDON, 1941

Lonely now this unreal city of
desperate hopes and slow insidious
will to continue living, and broken the pavement
where our young desires went courting

Low and determined the voices, like rain
on the splintered window, heavy as these
iron shutters the faces of those seeking
an end to the chain, the vision.

For those the strong, the powerful, not
realizing as yet their power, and also
for these, the impotent, let mastery be given
and the will to act, that out

of this, the indescribable, treading
the path of promises, hope shall fuse,
resolve spring as ears to reaper, sharper
than this, fertile as those

Alan Rook

DARK WINGS IN THE NIGHT

Hallo huntsman,
What do you ride for
Now that the moon
Is blacked from the sky?

*I ride the winds
For a helpless quarry.
Man is my fox.
Man must die.*

Hallo huntsman,
What is your steed
That tramples the clouds
Like a fallow field?

*Destruction, powered
With sputtering cylinders,
And a hawk's pinions!
Will you yield?*

Hallo huntsman,
What are your hounds
Whose quivering nostrils
Find you your prey?

*Hate and Envy,
Lust and Madness!
Know ye more keen
For the slot than they?*

Hallo huntsman,
Who are you
That gallops the void
On the hooves of death?

*The Beast you bound
From his bonds arisen!
On the bombed cities
Feel my breath!*

Hallo huntsman,
We doff our caps.
The night is yours.
Ride it well.

But we wait the dawn.
The dawn is coming.
In the bright dawn,
We will see you in hell!

Thomas Caldecot Chubb

TWO POEMS

AMONG STRANGERS

For a short time after his death
A man retains his semblance; friends come in
And peer at the pale parchment face
And think: O death, what dignity has death
Conferred on him! Carry off mental pictures
That blur as swiftly as the buried features.

I knew this man
For moments only of the day
When he, apart from friends, life lost,
Began to put identity away;
After convulsive death corruption
Is quiet and intimate as pregnancy.

We lifted him down from the top rack of the ambulance
At night in pouring rain;
Rain on our hands, torch shining under the hood;
We eased the stretcher out so as not to catch the blankets,
And carried him in to the white electric light:

The pale domed head fallen back, the glazing eyes
Half-shut, huge hands oblong as oars
Flattened against the blue serge sides,
The jersey fitting like a skin. We raised him up
On our forearms while the nurses took away
The blood-caked blankets, the pathetic sea-boots
That, holding still his shape, seemed amputated;

In light reflected from glazed walls decay
 Began to form its foetus.

Cold rain had fallen all day. In the morning
 The enemy had swooped out of the squally sky.
 Bullets had spattered like rain off the wet deck,
 Had caught him in the neck, the knee, the shoulder.
 He lay in his berth all day while the waves lifted
 The bows of the tiny drifter and crashed them down,
 Crushed lead on bone.
 He came ashore in a dinghy, hardly aware
 Of the rain on his numbing face, on the hands at the oars.

All we could do for him
 Was to carry him in for the nurses to wash his limbs,
 Midwives at his premature death.

SPRING OFFENSIVE

We buy the beauty of the spring
 with the mind's anguish;
 Many who stand before the rush
 pay with their blood.

Pink almond blossom breaks the ice
 frees armored wheel;
 Buttercups and laburnum
 fill quisling purses.

Skins that should be sensitive are raw
 in gentle sunlight;

Nostrils are scorched by scent of flowers;
eyes blink.

The noise of aeroplanes
stains the blue
Far promise of peace upon earth,
contaminates the ear.

We have seen the fragility of houses
the guts of palaces,
The fluidity of the lines and squares
of organized society.

The individual man and woman
the loved roots
Of a familiar existence
quiver and blur;

Our children are in common, and the tribe
alone exists;
Ants hurry from the crushing foot
and some survive.

Those whom spring sunshine most intoxicates
have foreseen
This disintegration of springtime
spring after spring,

Foreseen spring sunshine setting free
the upper ice,
The almond blossom loosening
the avalanche.

R. N. Currey

TWO POEMS

THE HUMAN TOUCH

Animals are not much concerned about talents, personalities,
place.

When animals meet, neither ribbons nor medals are displayed.
And the least of losses, with them, is the loss of face
For animals live in a world not animal-made.

But environment pours from these tender beaks as the age-old
northern rains

Stream through the stone grey conduits in the season of grief.
Until Tom, Dick and Harry pass for the years' gains;
Gesture for gist, eyes for ideas, private bulk for the mountains
of our belief.

FELLOW STOCKHOLDERS:

Only the bursts of delight,
A long window admitting the moon,
Danger's god-making thunder and blinding shine—
Relieve our doubts concerning the biggest job of all;
project number nine-nine-nine.

Financed out of the old folks' opulence in appreciated paper
Sustained because the young think it will pay.
The profits are all dreams castles, embraces;
A flawless speedboat on the holiday.

Helen Goldbaum

MORNING

I

Morning is lifting slowly out of darkness,
white as devotion, skywide, without knowing
how like belief is the implicit, outward
motion of growing

Shape is restored at dawn to objects singly
as though each separate thing were beautiful
because of its existence, difference seeming
to be the soul.

Solids are whole again, as though discovered
with love, with hands; dimensions are made clear
as though it were an act of faith: the circle
becomes the sphere.

Color is new upon each sunlit surface;
lifting lines are reimbursed with flight;
cool and level lie the planes of morning
covered with light.

Slow as belief is all awakening:
the groping leaf, the groping hand, the blind
blood groping out of chaos toward whatever
pattern it can find.

Simple as proof, articulate as doctrine,
morning reveals again the vast safe-keeping
of all identity, of small, unguarded species,
through all our sleeping.

II

The world can be reduced to this irrelevant morning.
a naked field: an empty wood: a wingless sky:
the pale sun lifting neither hope nor warning,
nor any meaning for the human eye.

The body can awaken like this: so lonely
as not to seem familiar, but strangely set apart
as though it were a tree, and the beholder only
a stone shaped oddly like a mortal heart.

Yet must the breath forever, this side of dying,
alter its rhythm for the rising sun,
invent the song, renew the legend, crying
the various names of beauty, one by one.

Edith Henrich

TWO POEMS

HILL FORT: CARRADALE POINT (Kintyre, Argyll, Scotland)

I

Dim in an epoch without name
Skin-clad folk with stones and flame

Crowned this dun thrust out in ocean
(A broad harpoon in a vast cetacean),

A promontory when tide is low—
Needing a dory to reach it now.

They laid the stones as close as teeth
(There is ash of bones in the trench beneath

The lowest course); they brought to the wall
Creels of gorse and osier, full

Of sea-weed, sand in sacks of hide
They brought to bind the walls to their need.

They spilled the blood of ox and sheep
Laid on the wood round the circle-heap

Of sand, stones, weed; the Men of Iron
Gorged, drank mead, danced round the fire on

That rocky height. Boat-crews on islands
Beheld the light, spearmen on highlands.

The tall flame fountains, they know—at sea,
And on the mountains— raids no more free.

Flame sank to coal; coals fell to dust.
A ring, thick, whole, the hue of rust

But iron-strong the stones were found—
A shield for a throng, on that sea-girt mound,

Of warriors, oxen, women and sheep;
They could roll rocks on their heads down the steep

If the foe appears, by land or from sea—
Shoot, cast spears, at the enemy . . .

II

Ruins the elders' plans, the deft
Work of the builders; the fort was left

Through millennial weather to flake and blacken
(The walls are heather, the hollow, bracken).

But fierce in my veins the raiders' blood
Surges and strains against the flood

From the Folk of the Dun; the latter wins:
The walls are down— quick, hods of skins

And hide-lashed barrows . . . a watch on the cliff . . .
Straighten the arrows. . . . It may be if

De w'ite folks call me Gopher John,—
Rise an' shine! Rise an' go!
 But dat ol' name am done an' gone!—
Ridin' down to Mexico!

I'se John Cowaya—Big John Hoss!
Boun' fo' de Promised Lan'!
 Ob de Seminole Nigguhs I'se de boss!
Down to de Rio Gran'!

Creeks an' w'ite folks, stay behin'!
Rise an' shine! Rise an' go!
 'Case we doan' want yo' on ouah min',
Ridin' down to Mexico.

Creeks an' w'ite folks, ain't yo' fraid—
We'se boun' fo' de Promised Lan'!—
 We'll treat yo' lak ol' Majuh Dade?
Souf to de Rio Gran'!

Ol' Zack Taylor, so dey say—
'Way, Santy Anny!
 Won de battle ob Monterey.
Po' ol' Santy Anny!
 But *we* fed'im 'sofky' so hot it bu'n
 Fo' dinnah Chris'mas day—
 Make he yell an' make he run,
 Tear he coat an' drop he gun,
 Back in Floriday!

Yo-ho-ee-lee! Yo-ho-ee-lo!
 We'se Seminole boun' fo' Mexico!

Yo-ho-ee-lo! Yo-ho-ee-lee!
De Lawd hab say, "You shall be free!"

Wil' Cat ridin' at de head—
Rise an' shine! Rise an' go!
Leadin' de chillun lak Moses led!—
Ridin' down to Mexico!

Cloud by day an' fiah by nights—
Boun' fo' de Promised Lan'!—
Gib, Oh Lawd, to de Israelites!—
Down to de Rio Gran'!

Come along, Seminole, Kickapoo!
Rise an' shine! Rise an' go!
Delaware an' Shawnee, too!—
Down to Mexico!

Doan' yo' want youah own co'n-fiel'—
Down in de Promised Lan'!—
In place ob dose dat de w'ite men steal?
Hooray fo' de Rio Gran'!

All yo' Texas an' Arkansaw slave—
Rise an' shine! Rise an' go!
Cross de Jordan an' yo' shall be save!—
Down in Mexico!

Out ob de way, yo' ol' Coma'che!
Rise an' shine! Rise an' go!
An' likewise yo', suh, Mistuh Apache!
We're on ouah way to Mexico!

W'en we git souf ob de Rio Gran',
 Down in Mexico,
 Doan' want yo' foolin' 'roun' ouah lan'—
 We an' ouah guns say, "No!"

Steal all yo' lak f'om de Texians,
 No'th ob de Rio Gran',
 Walk mighty wide ob us Mexians,
 Down in de Promised Lan'!

Unless yo' want to hab youah hair—
Rise an' shine! Rise an' go!—
 Hung on a pole in de village-square!
Down in Mexico!

Ax nigh yo' han', finguh on de trigguh—
Boun' fo' de Promised Lan'!
 Gonna build a Free-State fo' de Injun an' de Nigguh,
Souf ob de Rio Gran'!

Rise an' shine. Rise an' go!
Boun' fo' de Promised Lan'!
We'se ridin' down to Mexico,
Souf ob de Rio Gran'!

We'se boun' fo' de Promised Lan', Good Lawd!
We'se boun' fo' de Promised Lan'!
Oh, Brudduh, Sistuh, come wid us!—
We'se boun' fo' de Promised Lan'!

Yo-ho-ee-lee!

Kenneth Porter

REVIEWS

SYMBOL OF OUR SEARCH

The Airmen, by Selden Rodman. Random House.

THAT the poet must be the scholar of his own work is one of the characteristic vices of modern writing and accounts in part for the elephantiasis of many of our poems. Of this disorder, photography, source-notes, marginalia, and diagrams, on the one hand, and multiple metrical forms and a variety of styles, on the other, are typical symptoms. The long poem of today makes use of every desperate device to keep it together, although frequently the argument itself is synthetic and defies real unity. A list of recent epics would show that most of our poets consider *The Waste Land* as the beginning and not the end of an era of literature.

Mr. Rodman's long poem, *The Airmen*, is relatively free of the imperfections of its form. The argument, that "to justify the Bird" the airman "must sacrifice himself," is whole and large and requires the poetic elaboration of myth and history to substantiate it. The poet selects the figures of Daedalus and Icarus (Part I), Leonardo (Part II), the Wrights (Part III), and Lauro de Bosis (Part IV), to illustrate his subject.

In Part I the narrative, carried chiefly by loose pentameters, presents the moral of the work in the form of the Inventor's invocation to the Earth-mother.

May this invention, symbol of our search
For your divinity and our delight,
Challenging space, this armature of tight-
Strung manufactured ligaments by which
Like gods or demons we presume to reach
Unnatural supremacy,
Phaethon-like, be

Closer to heaven, looking down upon
All bondage with the beneficence of light—
Seeing what darkly prophets dared foretell;
Doing what poets sang of in their verse;
Captains for commerce; conquerors for armament,
But only mathematicians counted possible—
May this invention be Your instrument:
Man's blessing or curse!

The curse is pronounced for all those who will use wings for any "ambition higher than bold design and art to freely cruise." Certain passages, too long to quote without spoiling, achieve high rhetoric without having to resort to old English. The fall of Icarus in *The Take-off* compares favorably with Hart Crane's description of the plane crash in *The Bridge*.

Leonardo's Dream (Part II) includes several excellent stanzaic poems (notably *The Battle of Anghiari*) and some dialogue passages that come closer to Browning than anything of Pound's. Leonardo, provoked by his series of defeats and the fear that men will call his love of science pride, deliberately crashes his airship from a mountain top. *Death at Amboise*, the closing monologue, is dramatic poetry of superb force.

Part III deals with the Brothers of Dayton, one of the most durable and exciting themes of our poetry. The verse of a great part of this section appears to be intentionally ramshackle: snatches of song and newspaper and technical information are conveyed on long elastic lines of six, seven, or eight feet.

And how is what they understand of flying to be felt
(Though discipline and not the single will is now responsible)
By armies organized to kill or wing-assemblers at a belt?

The more or less "political" tone of this quotation suggests the moral of the final book, *Icarus Regained*.

Here we are introduced to the figure of Lauro de Bosis who, Mr. Rodman says in a note, is a man "whose career is a key to

our epoch" and whose name "will some day stand with Garibaldi's and Matteotti's among the heroes of a free Italy." A fine prose interlude, *Ground School*, weaves together the subjects of the foregoing books. Lauro is made to say

. . . To soar above all barriers dividing men upon this earth.
To bring the divided and blinded the freedom of the bird.
To reach for higher glory than the burning of cities. In life to
be a messenger between the earth and sky.
Yes, Icarus.

Moved by his antagonism to Fascism "to make some gesture expressive of the individual's rebellion" the poet-aviator flies over Rome in the manner of d'Annunzio (under whom he had studied civics) and drops leaflets from his ship. The Fascists pursue and de Bosis is lost at sea.

It may be argued that de Bosis' adventure falls within range of the Inventor's curse ("But if . . . these wings are borrowed for a personal use"), in which case the plot of the poem is considerably weakened. *The Airmen*, at any rate, is a political poem and as such is open to political examination. There is little question that Mr. Rodman's moral efforts confuse the great issue of his poem.

Karl J. Shapiro

RINGING THE CHANGES

A Letter From the Country and Other Poems, by Howard Baker
New Directions.

The Paradox in the Circle, by Theodore Spencer. New Directions.

Both Baker and Spencer might be ticketed as "metaphysicals," and both draw freely upon traditional verse arrangements. There is, however, little or no resemblance between them: neither an inclination towards profundity, nor for echoing and rhyming,

determines a poet's essential style. Baker has a rich sense of landscape—though in the manner of academic painting—and a deep alliance with the generations-philosophy and formal orthodoxy of American "regional" literature. While Spencer is poor in imagery, drily equivocal, and individual, even eccentric, in conception

A review, in the May issue of *POETRY*, of phonograph recordings made by Spencer of his ballad-like verses suggested that the vocal reading might prove preferable to the printed presentation. Without having heard the records, I shall be happy to accept such an estimate. It is possible that this poet's voice succeeds in deriving sound values from his repetitions of words and phrases and his other verse mechanisms that do not yield themselves to the page. A spirited recitation of *Eptaph*, for instance, might provide stimulating entertainment:

She was a high-class bitch and a dandy
Prancing man was he and a dandy
Man he was with that tall lady.

But the use of the word "dandy" nine times, "man" six times, and "bitch" five, in this poem of 15 lines, has not been sufficiently subtle to keep the device out of its own way on paper.

Ten "shuttles" in the twelve-line *Why the Weavers Object* may claim effectiveness as a psychological trick to render the hypnotic fixing of the weaver's attention on this moving part of the loom. But like the weavers, we may object to this monotony, especially when, as in others of the poems, the thread of reiteration is less "firm in the cloth."

The Paradox in the Circle is interesting for its studied art, spareness of structure, and affiliation with British and Irish epigrammatic and gnomic verse. Spencer imitates mainly the mystery of the ballad, with its half-cryptic talk:

You see that hill, that golden hill?
Said the man with the open heart.
I think I see, said the opposite man,
And locked his heart with an iron key.

Yet his poems, all short, lack the free rolling narrative and lustrous coloration of the traditional ballad; they tend towards the cerebral compression of the riddle, posing dichotomies concerning man and woman, youth and age, seeking and finding, beginning and ending. Their form is insufficiently various for witty verse—about half begin with "he said," "she said," "they said," "said the thread," "the old man said," "said the doctor"—and their diction has, commonly, the abstractness of prose, for all its catchy metre.

Baker is truer to the tradition of the best English metaphysical poetry, in which the idea seems to be modeled by nature itself, through the comparison and inter-reflection of objects.

The shaggy vine in multiplicity
Matches the pale perfections of the sea,
But the clear modes of Sea prevail
Over the vine's complex detail,

has a denser weave than Bridges, though it lacks the metaphorical dash and ever-surprising pictorial sharpness of Marvell *Ode to the Sea* from which the above stanza is taken, is a beautifully balanced poem, summing up a restrained aristocratic philosophy of time, destiny, and human duty. Other excellent pieces are *Advice to a Man Who Lost a Dog*, *Patria*, *Destiny*, *Violation of Logic*, and *The End of the Year* 1939.

It is true that the campus gong is always heard in the background of Baker's cool, solemn pastorals. But the filtering of sensation through the curtains of the library is an essential hygiene of the Winters group and other partisans of gentility. At times the benefits of dignity and of fellowship with the ages

are paid for in loss of tension and freshness, as in lines like

Left off their dreary round and took a respite,

or

They hung upon the death-blue brow of Heaven
Like pungent rumors from the verdant years
Of terraced Babylonia, or of Goshen . . .

Yet Baker's work proves that the impulse towards a stability founded on old values can, in poetry, result in pleasure, charm, and calm beauty.

Though it is hard to see in what sense either Baker or Spencer is a "New Direction," Mr. Laughlin, their publisher, should be congratulated on these handsomely printed pamphlets, with enough poems to fully identify the author, which he has been able to offer for thirty-five cents in his Poet of the Month Series.

Harold Rosenberg

AN OLD, OLD GARDEN

Under One Roof, by Agnes Lee Ralph Fletcher Seymour.

This posthumous volume of Agnes Lee's poems, a collection which she herself made of those she wished to preserve, comes strangely to the hand, and nestles in it, freighted with memories and a measured sadness.

For many years Agnes Lee was a well-loved member of POETRY's family. She used to come over from her retreat in a great grey-stone house near the lake, where she lived with her husband, the surgeon, and her courageous daughter, and laugh and discuss with us, with a gentle liveliness and an unflinching loyalty.

Yet she seemed always an anomaly in Chicago. In this brash, hopeful, struggling city Agnes Lee lived as one might live in

some remote corner of an old-world garden. It was, truth to tell, a gracious and endearing garden, this world of hers. The trees were old and stately, with a fine spread of branches, and leaves that whispered of the antique virtues. The paths were of worn stone, half overgrown with moss: and moss hung about the yellowed stone of the fountains. Down the balanced alleys one caught glimpses of mellowed statues of goddesses, and sometimes at twilight one felt the presence of a vanished empress who had walked and suffered there. Even the flowers in their formal beds were not quite of today, but were somehow sad and gently beautiful.

And yet one was always conscious of courage, too, in this world of hers, the courage of one who has faced many sorrows and met them quietly and simply, and who has chosen for herself, out of the many complexities of living, those values and those virtues which were inevitably hers.

All these things are in this volume, as they were in her personality. Agnes Lee was essentially a poet. Not a poet of today, but a true poet nonetheless. She had a feeling for the music of words, for the balanced thought and the subtle mood, a tenderness for all small and helpless things, whether child, bird, or flower. She had too a strong sense of drama. Those who remember her best-known poem, *Motherhood*, will remember this last. The poem is too long to quote here in full, but it tells a story of Mary, the mother of Christ, who as an old woman sits in the sun with another woman, a stranger, while the two talk of their babies. Mary remembers the infant Jesus, and the other woman answers, "Even so was mine." And at last:

And Mary whispered. "Tell me, thou,
Of thine." And she:
"Oh, mine was rosy as a bough

Blooming with roses, sent, somehow,
To bloom for me!
His balmy fingers left a thrill
Deep in my breast that warms me still."

Then she gazed down some wilder, darker hour,
And said — when Mary questioned, knowing not:
"Who art thou, mother of so sweet a flower?" —
"I am the mother of Iscariot."

I doubt whether a more poignantly dramatic last line, or one which so perfectly throws the subject into many-dimensional relief, has been written in our time. Even in her short poems one often has this sense of startled pleasure at the end, as in *Before Sleep*.

O child of struggle, here's the night!
Then rest, then rest.
Let peace come settle on your brow.
Put out the light —

Nor back to the old battle hark.
Draw down the shades,
Put out the light. And in your soul
Put out the dark.

And as for tenderness with all small things, here are the last lines from *A Nesting Linnet*.

She was so shy with every human
Before she nested in our tree.
Now she forgets the wilder wood,
Glad to be small and understood.

This volume will make no poetic history. But it is safe to say that a number of the poems will live long in the memory of those who are attuned to them. Agnes Lee has perhaps written her own best epitaph in these four lines which close *Two Canals*

Men of today, build strong! The price we know.
Bring to the land new steel, new stone, new faces!
But it's in the crannies of the old, old places
The flowers grow.

Eunice Tietjens

IN TWO LANGUAGES

Gedichte aus Reigate, by Rudolph Fuchs. Barnard & Westwood, London.

This small white volume containing a score of "poems from exile" is an eloquent example for the adventures of literature in our days. It is German poetry, written by a Czechoslovakian writer, driven out of his country by the Nazis, living in a bombed suburb of London.

Rudolf Fuchs has a good name both in Czech and in German literature as one of the best translators and interpreters of modern Czech poetry. Through him Petr Bezruc, one of the most important Czech poets, has been made known to the European public. Fuchs was also a noted playwright and a distinguished poet, but in latter years his poetry seemed to have faded. Now he happily surprises his friends with a new poetical phase—melancholy that gives way to a new strength and the indomitable belief that the days of Hitler are counted in spite of all victories.

But the most interesting thing about this book from the standpoint of literary criticism is the introduction of English landscape, English climate, and English character into German poetry. Whole words and lines of English appear in German verses and they fit perfectly into the poetical melody, the rhythm and rhyme:

Ein Friedhof mitten stand
from the 13th century.
Die Rosen bluheten noch
in loving memory

When I read these lines the first time I even did not notice that they were written in two languages. There are many other such instances. A poem about Svanda Dudak, famous Czech bagpipe

player, has the refrain:

How do you do? How do you do?

And this refrain gives, in the German poem, the right impression of the strange bagpipe trills at the end of Svanda Dudak's bitter-sweet songs.

F. C. Weiskopf

FIRST FLIGHT

Narration With a Red Piano, by J. Calder Joseph. The Little Man Press.

This is a book of extremely youthful verses. It has energy and sensual enthusiasm but it is too soon to say what sort of a poet the writer really is.

In the last few years an appreciation of social forces has brought about an undue respect for certain kinds of subject matter and a corresponding relaxation of craftsmanship. The left style has been talky without tension: it has presented a catalogue of facts without revealing any poetic insights about them. It represents a kind of invasion of the poetic domain by journalism, coupled with a pose of sentimental toughness. Only too often respect for the social point of view has tempered the strict criticism this type of writing deserves. Certainly no young poet has the right to throw away the technical gain of a W. C. Williams, a Stevens, or a Marianne Moore without offering something better in its place.

There is another confusion involved. Somehow the impression has arisen that poetic refinements are merely effete and symptomatic of decadence. Left poetry is assumed to be written by and for workers; it has guts, and that is all that matters. Of course this is mere self-delusion. Workers do not read

handset editions nor do they write verses in free rhythms. The only poetry with which the proletariat is really in contact is poetry to be sung, a fact which Bertolt Brecht has always known and wisely made use of. This carefree negligence is therefore merely a pose and a bad pose at that, unhappily encouraged by the little essay which Mr. Saroyan contributes to *Narration With a Red Piano*.

Granted this premise, the most successful poem in the book is one called *Worker*, which is a fairly singable song.

Got the big earth to plow under,
Come Rain
Come Thunder
Come Trouble again,
Got my bloody brood,
Got my whiskey
And my solitude.

This has an agreeable swagger, even if "bloody brood" is a rather silly affectation. The following:

Brother, do you believe?
What? I asked, waiting, pale hungry. . . .
Up my sleeve,
Brother, he continued
I got a three day cure
a complete history of communism
a mechanical bottle
an un-ex-pur-a-gated book on sex,
Brother, do you believe
Christ is here tonight?

will probably bring a blush of shame to the writer's cheek in later years.

Mr. Calder is only twenty-six. He has plenty of time to make up his mind, plenty of time to gain objectivity, to put some disciplined effort into his writing and to learn that spontaneity and originality (Saroyan to the contrary) are not synonymous.

The typography and design of the pamphlet are really a delight. The Little Man Press deserves much credit for the kind of book-making it has done on this and other recent editions.

H. R. Hays

OBSERVING AND DESCRIBING

The Black Butterfly, by Carl Grabo. Packard and Co.

Renewal, by Pearl Hogrefe. The Prairie Press.

Here Only a Dove, by Sister Maris Stella. St. Anthony Guild Press.

Cry, the first poem in Mr. Grabo's book *The Black Butterfly*, is burdened with so many inversions—"Golden the comb of lights / Merging with gray," "Gushes the wearied heart's / Blood to the streets"—that the reader, as he moves on through the book, begins looking for more of them with a kind of dread, and finding them. This habit makes the poet seem old-fashioned. But the pensive poetic spirit that pervades the whole book outweighs this fault. One finishes it with the feeling that out of materials that were, it might be said, already at hand—simple exact words and conventional forms—the poet's dignity and maturity of thought have created moving poetry.

Knowing Mr. Grabo's reputation as an authority on Shelley, one would expect to see that poet's influence in his work, but I find no trace of it. *Timelessness* and several other poems, however, have some of the sonority and pace of Byron. In his songs Mr. Grabo captures the genuine spirit of folk-tunes. The following—I give only the first four lines—might be sung and danced between the acts of *The Beggar's Opera*:

It's a poor world, my masters,
Not made for you and me,
A world which spawns disasters,
Hate, pain, and cruelty.

Most recent war poems seem to show, as did the verse written early in the last war, that it is not enough to write "in passion and in deep concern" in order to write good poetry. In *Spain*, however, Mr. Grabo has effectively tempered anger with restraint and pity. It is interesting to note that this poem, which appeared in *POETRY* last year, arrives spontaneously at the thought expressed by Ernest Hemingway in his choice of title and epigraph for his latest novel. The poem describes the execution of a Spanish soldier, and concludes:

With him be peace. But this old tree
Bears scantlier now its crown of flowers,
And in the Autumn we shall see
More meagre fruit than once was ours.

Pearl Hogrefe's *Renewal* is a handsome book with a beautiful title page; under this careful dress is a body of thin poetry, agreeable where it is not pretentious. Miss Hogrefe's talent is for the observation of nature. *Night in March*, a poem that gives a sense of wheeling, ponderous immensity, demonstrates what she does best. Like so many other poets, she should discipline herself to avoid phrases no longer fresh, such as "the mystery of life," "release from pain," and "daily strife." An example of the pretentious in her work is the final poem, *Dreamer*—a prosy, uninspired story in free verse about the last man and woman left on earth after a cataclysm. The intended irony is bogged down by lines like these:

Moving to stir the fire, she found his arms,
His warm and eager lips. Her mind surrendered.

The publishers of *Here Only a Dove* think that Sister Stella Maris is "at her pinnacle in such themes as that of the title poem." There is intensity of feeling and a sequence of thought uniting

this group of sonnets, and the poet does reach a kind of pinnacle of faith in the one called *I Shall Not Be Alone*. But most readers will probably find more enjoyable the last poems in the book, where nature provides the happiest themes for a style that has a quiet sparkle and charming simplicity. *Landscape With Children*, *Under Their Dream*, *Bay Violets*, and the following, *Grapes*, are descriptive poems of places and incidents known in childhood, written in a conversational sonnet form:

Then there were the grapes turned purple in the sun
hanging in heavy bunches close and low.
These were great purple garden grapes Not one
of the children had ever seen any but wild grapes grow.
Wild-running grapes are tart and spare and small.
You find the vines on big trees, clinging high
to withered branches, or on the sun-facing wall
of an old farmhouse. Invariably they lie
well out of reach, and tempting, and you find
gooseberry patches near them, and you gather
berries in buckets. Here you had no mind
to gather berries in buckets Here you had rather
suck the sweet grapes out of their juicy blue
pockets and let the sun pour down on you

There is a quality of steadiness and strength in all these poems that keeps them from ever seeming trivial. And when the poet writes of a mother who is dead, this same quality becomes courage under deep emotion, and effectively evokes emotion in the reader.

If a summing up is possible, it may be briefly said that these poets accept the established forms of poetry and use them with skill, and that all three hit their best stride when observing and describing the external world.

Judith S. Bond

A GOTHIC PARTHENON

Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours. Texts, notes, and vocabulary Edited by Raymond Thompson Hill and Thomas Goddard Bergin. Yale University Press.

The poetry of the Provençal troubadours, like many other things neglected by Renaissance humanists and later neo-classicists till the Romantics rediscovered them, has generally been appreciated, for the past hundred years, with a pronounced Romantic bias, as if these medieval poets had sought to achieve only the new ideals which the Romantics proposed and as if they had always avoided the older classical ideals which the Romantics derided. The troubadours are thus suspected of having been concerned with problems of self-expression and originality as we now conceive them; they are often praised for having been "naive" or "Gallic" or more "free" than the "constrained" poets of the neo-classical age. Yet we need but read the critical treatises of John of Salisbury or Dante to understand that the medieval artist sought to attain exactly what the neo-classicists later achieved: to raise the literature of the vernaculars to the same lofty level as that of the classical languages and, in all the arts, to reestablish, by imitation of the ancients, the Golden Age of imperial Rome, now Christianized. The poetry of the Middle Ages, whether Latin or vernacular, thus all belongs, with few exceptions, to one general movement which, beginning with the Carolingian Renaissance of the 9th century, was finally purged of its more Christian or Gothic elements by the later Italian Renaissance and then achieved its aims in the 17th and 18th centuries. The medieval mind was so impressed by Aristotle that, had his *Poetics* then been known, they would have commanded as much

respect, among poets, as his other treatises did among philosophers and scientists; until the *Poetics* were actually rediscovered in the early sixteenth century, the *Ars Poetica* of Horace and those of his medieval imitators (Geoffroy de Vinsauf, etc.) ruled the roost of medieval literary theory which viewed poetry only normatively or rhetorically, in terms of genres or of topics.

A neo-Gothic or Pre-Raphaelitic appreciation of Provençal poetry is therefore absurd. But apart from a few Petrarchan scholars in 16th century Italy (Bembo, Velutello, Castelvetro, Barbieri, etc.) all others who have ever rediscovered the troubadours, from Lacurne de Sainte-Palaye and Millot in the 18th century through Raynouard, Rochemont, Schlegel, Diez, Fauriel and others of the Romantic generation right up to Ezra Pound in our own times, have consistently presented the Provençal poets in an aura of neo-Gothic gloom or of Pre-Raphaelitic sweetness and light. Even our appreciation of Dante has, until recently, been unswervingly neo-Gothic or Pre-Raphaelitic: from Rossetti to Eliot and Pound, English and American literature remains fundamentally Romantic in its attitude towards everything medieval. But the art of the middle ages is more pre-classical than anti-classical: while Latin poetry was still generally imitating ancient forms, the poetry of the vernaculars of Western Europe tended towards new forms which, though perhaps fresh and folksy in their dim lost origins, yet strove, as the vernaculars too, towards some elaborate and learned classicism which alone has survived, analogous to that which Latin had already achieved.

The present anthology comes at a time when all existing anthologies or chrestomathies of ancient Provençal poetry, published in France, Germany or Italy, are unavailable to American

book-buyers on account of the blockade of European exports. For the few of us who are insane or courageous enough to attempt in our present chaos a study of this much-neglected literature, the Yale anthology comes as a godsend; and American students will at last be able to read some of the best texts without having to consult German or Italian glossaries and commentaries. The editors have conformed to strict standards of medievalist scholarship, thus avoiding all the Pre-Raphaelitism and nonsense of Pound or of, say, the *Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*. The texts included are nearly all lyrical, though a few fragments of longer poems have been added almost as an appendix; it might have been worth devoting more space to didactic poetry, which, with the *Ensenhamen*, reached an elaborate perfection now as significant, for an appreciation of Provençal civilization in all but its earliest period, as the courtly or religious lyric.

Edouard Roditi

VERSE DRAMA AND THE RADIO

A Market Survey and Technical Guide

IN the June 1939 issue of POETRY, discussing poetry in its relation to radio, John Wheelwright wrote: "Radio needs its ministry. The social implications of broadcasting are as wide and subtle as the waves of the air. To leave a large part of citizens deaf to poetry is politically dangerous."

This is in consonance with a statement made recently before a New York audience by Davidson Taylor of CBS, pointing out that no very consistent effort has been made to put poetic drama on the radio, when he said: "Most of the poets in America

have been remiss in failing to recognize that radio reestablishes with their public the contact which made the troubadours and their humbler colleagues socially significant. The wide social function of poetry could be restored through radio, if poets would prepare themselves to use it."

In an effort to be of practical assistance to poets who wish to accept this challenge, to aid them in finding out the requirements of the existing market for verse drama and the attitudes of the major broadcasting companies, POETRY consulted the following executives and authorities: *Mr. L. H. Titterton*, Manager of Script Division, National Broadcasting Company; *Mr. Davidson Taylor*, Assistant to the Vice President in Charge of Broadcasts, Columbia Broadcasting Company; *Mr. Max Wylie*, formerly Director of Script Division, Columbia Broadcasting Company; *Mr. Norman Corwin*, author and director of the "26 by Corwin" series, of the Columbia Workshop; and *Mr. Robert Simon*, Director of Continuities of WOR of the Mutual Broadcasting System. The information obtained is assembled in the present symposium, in which all the material is given by means of direct quotation.

Just as the symphony has reached over the air a new and larger public who have learned to understand and love it, so poetry and the poetic drama may be able to win a responsive new audience through radio. But it must be borne in mind that, whereas music is perfectly suited to the conditions of radio, poetry will win its hearing only by skillful and realistic adaptation to the new medium

The results of our questionnaire appear on the following pages.

Amy Bonner

IS THERE A DEMAND FOR POETIC DRAMA ON THE RADIO?

L. H. Titterton of NBC:

"NBC has for years pioneered in experimentation in the dramatic field and through its Listeners' Playhouse gives an opportunity to authors to exhibit various forms of writing. During the past several years a number of poetic plays have been produced. There is always a demand for a good play. NBC has a playreading committee which carefully examines all manuscripts submitted."

Davidson Taylor of CBS:

"There is always a demand for good drama. The fact that it is poetic is something of a handicap as far as most radio shows are concerned. The experimental programs such as the Columbia Workshop are the most likely to produce poetic drama."

Max Wyllie of CBS:

"We could use more than we are getting. One of the problems is that the stuff which comes in is so bad. Many persons seem to think that script-writing is easy. It is the most difficult thing and requires skill of a special sort."

Norman Corwin of CBS:

"There is certainly need for good poetic drama on the air, but the place for it is another matter. Production of verse plays usually runs higher in cost than ordinary dramas. Outside of the Columbia Workshop and the NBC Radio Guild, I don't know where a poetic script has a chance."

Robert Simon of WOR:

"There is a demand for good drama—which would include poetic drama."

HOW SHOULD POETS GO ABOUT GETTING THEIR MATERIAL
CONSIDERED?

L. H. Titterton of NBC:

"Authors may address their manuscripts to the Play Reading Committee, Script Division, NBC, Rockefeller Plaza, New York City. A covering letter may be included if desired, stating that the specified script is intended for consideration for some particular series of programs. This is not really necessary, for our readers will recognize the type of work and automatically consider it in relation to available series on the air for which we are buying scripts from free-lance writers. In my experience, time is simply wasted by an author writing in to ask if something

he has done is likely to be acceptable. A description of a literary work is so much less satisfactory than the work itself"

Davidson Taylor of CBS:

"Since it is improbable that poetry will be used extensively on commercial features the author should address the director of the script division of the network or station on which he wants to have his work performed. The work will be registered on receipt and relayed from the script director's office to everyone in the organization who might consider the material. If material is sent in to a specific program, it should be addressed to the director of that program."

Robert Simon of WOR:

"It is best to query the station—indicating in a preliminary letter the type and scope of the drama. The station will then supply information concerning submission of the actual script. Unless the author has in mind a definite program in which he would like to have his drama included, the query should be made to the program department of the station" [Note This applies only in submitting material to stations of the Mutual Broadcasting System. In most other cases it is definitely inadvisable to send preliminary letters. In the case of the Mutual Broadcasting System, the scripts and queries should be sent to the individual stations, not to the network.]

WHAT TYPE OF MATERIAL IS ACCEPTABLE? [IN GENERAL]

Norman Corwin of CBS:

"The type of material best suited to air use is that which moves quickly, creates vivid imagery, and establishes direct communication with the listener. Descriptive verse has no place on the air, for the listener rarely has the patience to set himself to the task of visualizing what is being described. Rather, the listener should be allowed to *collaborate* in the painting of landscapes. The radio playwright has the finest set of designers in the world; the imagination of his audience. Radio's peculiar foreshortening of time and the highly competitive conditions under which it operates (competing for listening attention with a thousand distractions in the home) make it impossible for whimsey and subtlety to register."

Davidson Taylor of CBS:

"It is essential that the language be sufficiently intelligible for the unaided ear to catch what is said the first time it is heard. A great deal of poetic drama is not suitable for the stage; the language is not suitable, as for instance in *Prometheus Bound*. It must be possible to understand

what is being said by listening to it for the first time; it must be condensed and worked, and aimed at the unaided ear. Radio conveys an oddly personal message, although millions hear it simultaneously."

Robert Simon of WOR:

"It must be something to listen to—not 'library' or 'closet' drama. The touchstone is. Who listens? It must be remembered that it is a general audience, and the material cannot be esoteric or obscure, like a private joke. One must not take it for granted that the audience has the same specialized background—literary or otherwise—as the author. Thus there is more chance of an audience listening with interest to a drama based on a continuation of *Hamlet* than to one based on Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*."

WHAT TYPE OF MATERIAL AS TO SUBJECT MATTER?

L. H. Titterton of NBC:

"Anything that is in accordance with generally understood standards of good taste and that is in the public interest may be treated by the poetic dramatist. Radio does not wish to offend the sensibilities of its listeners; obviously, therefore, such words as 'wop' and 'nigger' are forbidden. Also, under the Federal Communications Commission Act, broadcasters are forbidden to put on the air anything which may be described as obscenity, profanity, or blasphemy. This has been interpreted to mean that even the phrase 'My God' is profane. Naturally, at a time like this, when the country is highly stirred up by the world conflict, the decision as to what is in the public interest is a very hard one to make, and equally naturally the successful dramatist is moved by the march of world affairs and is apt to write on themes which suggest the horrors of war, the horrors of totalitarianism, etc. It is how these themes are treated that will be the basis of decisions as to whether the plays should or should not be produced at this time."

Davidson Taylor of CBS:

"If it is controversial, it has slight chance of being produced just now but there may even be a demand for controversial drama at some other time in our national history. You can't say in the abstract what will be acceptable; it depends upon the quality. A classical subject, for instance, might prove irresistible. You can't be sure in advance."

Norman Corwin of CBS:

"Subject matter is unlimited save for the restrictions imposed on radio dramas, i. e., controversial political subjects, subjects affecting race, etc."

Robert Simon of WOR:

"It is difficult to set down suggestions about the limitations of subject matter, as treatment may, in some cases, be more important than subject. The author's judgment should tell him what is acceptable to a general listener."

WHAT TYPE OF MATERIAL. AS TO FORM?

Robert Simon of WOR:

"Form is a matter of technique; and the choice of technique rests with the author. The general public does not hear form—only the poets, or experts in poetry. A technical feat does not show as such, except to those trained in poetry. The author has the opportunity in radio to play with time and space about as he pleases, so long as the listeners know what time it is and what is filling up the space. There is an extra dimension in radio—the radio script writer has an unlimited stage if he wants to use it; he may have a scene in a skyscraper with some one calling down to the street, and his microphone may travel with his actors, as the movie camera follows film characters. The characterization should be clear so that the audience may distinguish the characters without depending on voice distinction alone. It should be borne in mind that clarity is vital, because the listener, unlike the reader, cannot linger over the lines or turn back to check up on something that may call for rereading in the light of subsequent events."

L. H. Titterton of NBC:

"The author should remember the cost of a large cast and endeavor to keep his play simple and compact and really dramatic and in simply expressed dialogue."

Davidson Taylor of CBS:

"The form is entirely up to the poet. He merely has to realize that he has nothing but sound to work with."

WHAT TYPE OF MATERIAL: AS TO LENGTH?

L. H. Titterton of NBC:

"Far the easiest length of play to book is the half-hour play."

Davidson Taylor of CBS:

"It should be long enough to take up a broadcast period of fourteen and a half, or twenty-nine and a half minutes, including announcements. Poets should learn to think in terms of time units rather than word

count. Of course, the amount of music used with the drama has a lot to do with the length of the speaking parts."

Robert Simon of WOR:

"In general, quarter hours and half hours are more likely to be available for broadcasting of drama than full hours, three-quarter hours are rarely used."

Norman Corwin of CBS:

"29 minutes, 30 seconds."

IS IT PREFERABLE TO HAVE ONE OR A SERIES?

L. H. Titterton of NBC:

"Only once have we done a series of poetic plays. Contrary to the usual programming picture, they were fifteen minutes in length. It was very hard to find time for them and in general it would seem advisable for your poetic dramatist to confine himself to single half-hour plays."

Robert Simon of WOR:

"Sometimes a station may be more interested in a series of dramas than in a single offering, because a series might make up a regular program spot. This doesn't mean, however, that a series is, of itself, imperative."

Davidson Taylor of CBS:

"It is possible that such a thing as a series of poetic dramas might be marketable but it seems unlikely."

HOW SHOULD MANUSCRIPTS BE PREPARED?

L. H. Titterton of NBC:

"They should be typed double-spaced on letterhead-size paper. The names of the characters speaking the lines should be typed in capital letters down the left hand margin and any speeches that run more than one line should not be extended into the margin."

Davidson Taylor of CBS:

"Manuscripts should be prepared somewhat along the models to be found in such texts as Max Wylie's *Radio Writing*. In addition to *Radio Writing*, Max Wylie's *Best Broadcasts* annuals and *Columbia Workshop Plays* could be recommended. *The Fall of the City*, by Archibald MacLeish, is available in book form, and so are several Corwin works."

Max Wylie of CBS:

"Double-spaced. Allow one minute to a page. A half-hour program should have 25 typewritten pages."

Norman Corwin of CBS:

"For script form, I recommend Erik Barnouw's *Handbook of Radio Writing*."

Robert Simon of WOR:

"It is a good idea to retain a carbon copy of any material submitted. This is not only a customary precaution against loss of the original in transit, but also makes available to the author a copy to which he may refer if there are specific questions about points in the script which he has submitted. This next isn't a caution, but it may be worth while for the author to attach to his query or script a short note about his activities and background. If manuals of radio writing are not accessible, the author is safe in presenting his material in conventional play script typing. The important thing is to put in stage directions, sounds and noises on a separate line. The reading of books on radio must remain optional with the author. Some authors take books so literally that their scripts become reflections of texts. Others will find it valuable to compare the samples and opinions in a variety of books."

PRICES AND COPYRIGHT

1. *About how much is a poet paid for a verse play?*
2. *Does payment include copyright and protection, or should the poet copyright his own work?*
3. *In repeat programs, does first payment include the privilege to repeat the work, or is an additional payment made?*

L. H. Titterton of NBC:

1. "That depends on the prestige of the poet and the size of our budget."
2. "The performance of poetry over the air does not constitute a publication under the law. An unpublished work is protected by the common law. Statutory copyright is unnecessary and need not be taken out by either author or broadcaster."

When asked to explain further, Mr. Titterton added: "The best way I can clarify the matter is by saying that unless a work is published without notice of copyright, it remains the property of the author. Performance by radio does not, according to the best copyright law-

yers, constitute publication. That must be done by means of printing and distributing it to the public. If distribution—by printing or mimeographing or in any other way reproducing the work and distributing it to the public—is contemplated, then the work must bear the legal copyright notice, and the proper application and copies of the work be filed in Washington together with the fee required. If this is not done, and distribution takes place, the work is automatically thrown into the public domain. Some authors, as a precaution, mail themselves a duplicate copy of the script in a registered envelope with a return receipt requested, and do not break the seal of the envelope, and retain it with the receipt so as to have proof that on a certain date their literary work did exist in a certain form. I believe that the Authors' League of America has some system of registering the work of members. But if an author is dealing with reputable people, this is really, in my opinion, a waste of effort. Our own noting of material offered to us is purely for the sake of our own operations, and cannot be construed as a means of protecting the property of people who are kind enough to submit manuscript or program proposals to us."

[Whether or not it may be necessary in connection with radio performance, POETRY strongly advises all poets to copyright their dramatic compositions as a matter of routine. Address Copyright Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., and ask for Application Form D2—Ed.]

3. "The arrangements under which radio scripts are acquired for broadcasting vary to some degree. The author may receive one payment and the broadcaster be able to use the material again without further payment, or a small repeat fee may at times be arranged for."

Robert Simon of WOR:

"There is no set scale of fees. Questions of rights and terms of payments are matters for negotiation between the author and the station."

Davidson Taylor of CBS:

1. "If a poet does a drama for a sustaining program, he is not likely to get more than about \$100 for it. However, if the piece is commissioned, the figures may vary slightly downward or considerably upward. The price for poetry on commercial programs would be whatever that rare traffic could bear."

2. "Payments for scripts entail the purchase of different rights in different instances. Sometimes the works are bought outright; sometimes they are bought for permanent performance on sustaining programs of the buyer; sometimes they are bought for a specified number of repetitions within a specified space of time; sometimes only a single performance is bought."

Norman Corwin of CBS:

"Prices for scripts range from \$100 to \$500, or, if used commercially, to \$1000. The average fee is \$100 to \$150. For protection, an author should copyright his material first. If the script is produced on a sustaining basis, the fee usually includes an option on the part of the company to produce it for a small fee at any time thereafter or even gratis in perpetuity. This is a practice I personally discourage, for I believe an author should sell only one performance right to anybody. A common arrangement, however, is one wherein the producing company receives a percentage (it should be no higher than 10 per cent) of movie, anthology, and amateur rights"

NEWS NOTES

LIKE others who are interested in the encouragement and recognition of good verse, we have often warned against the methods of unscrupulous pay-as-you-go publishers—those vanity businesses which trade on the beginning writer's acute wistfulness for publication. But mere advice is not very effective, and it is with pleasure that we hear that the Poetry Society of Wichita, Kansas, has been taking stronger measures. These book and anthology "rackets," while not actually illegal, are dishonest and reprehensible. What they do is to solicit manuscripts under the guise of an ordinary publishing firm, "accept" a manuscript for publication ("vital, fresh, keenly original"), and then extract money from the author to pay for an edition "as handsome as this verse deserves." Such publication is costly to the author and practically meaningless, and it has an immeasurably bad effect on the standards of published verse. Unfortunately, these schemes are aided by the irresponsible attitude of certain well-known poets who allow their work to be printed, as a decoy, in the sucker anthologies. Realizing all this, the Wichita group has adopted a ruling to expel members who have their work published by any of the firms known to employ questionable methods. Penalizing gullibility is perhaps the only way of reducing the number of victims. We should be glad to see other poetry societies come out with similar statements of policy.

Alfred A. Knopf announces that his Literary Fellowships, previously granted for both 1940 and 1941, will again be offered for 1942. These fellowships, each one consisting of an outright grant of \$1200 followed by book publication on a royalty basis, are given annually as a means of helping authors of worth-while projects to complete planned but unfinished books. Mr. Knopf grants three fellowships each year, one in fiction, one in history, the third in biography. Applications for 1942 fellowships must be received at the publisher's office, 501 Madison Avenue, New York City, not later than the close of business on Friday, February 27, 1942. Application forms and full details may be had on request.

Langston Hughes has been awarded a Rosenwald Fellowship for the coming year. The publication of his new book of poems, which was scheduled for June, has been postponed until August.

A letter dated June 8th from Roy Fuller, the young English poet, tells us that he was then aboard a training ship at Ipswich, and "in a month I am likely to be in anything from an armed trawler to the King George V. . . Everyone here reads but never gets enough to read, and periodicals are the ideal thing."

Kenneth Porter sends us the following historical note for his *Song of John Horse*:

"A tall, powerful, full-blooded Negro, known to whites as Gopher John, to Seminole Indians as John Cowaya (many variations), and to Seminole Negroes as John Horse, was brought up among the Seminoles of Florida—his parents were probably runaway slaves; took a conspicuous part as a Negro leader in the Seminole War, 1835-42, and at its conclusion was shipped with the rest of the tribe to the Indian Territory. In 1850, as aide to the Seminole Indian chief, Coacoochee or Wild Cat, he was a leader in the emigration of a large number of Negroes and Indians from the Territory into Mexico, the Indians desiring to avoid domination by the Creek Indians, among whom they were located, and the Negroes wishing to escape the menace of kidnapping by slavers, Creek and white. Wild Cat (Coacoochee) planned a Free State on the Rio Grande, to be populated by refugee Indians and runaway Negroes from the Indian Territory and Texas. His plans—in any case foredoomed to failure—were terminated by his death from small-pox in 1857. When settled in Mexico the Seminole waged relentless war against the wild Indians of Texas, partly in revenge for the slaughter by Comanche of Negroes and Indians crossing Texas to join the Seminole colony.

"Major Dade's command was annihilated in the first battle of the Seminole War, December 28th, 1835. 'Sofky' is a Seminole mush of coarse corn-meal and meat-scraps. 'Yo-ho-ee-lee' is the Seminole war-cry."

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

OLIVER ST JOHN GOGARTY, the Irish writer whom Yeats called "one of the great lyric poets of our age," is now living in New Jersey, working on a novel which will be published this fall.

JOSEPHINE MILES, the California poet, is the author of *Lines at Intersection* (Macmillan, 1939) and *Poems on Several Occasions*, which has just been published in New Directions' Poet of the Month Series. She teaches at the University of California.

KENNETH PORTER, a native of Kansas, has contributed to POETRY since 1931 and is the author of a book of poems, *The High Plains* (John Day, 1938). He is an instructor in history at Vassar. *Hill Fort* had its inception while Mr Porter was visiting the British writer Naomi Mitchison, at Carradale House in the summer of 1939.

JOHN HOLMES, of Somerville, Mass., is a frequent contributor to magazines and has published a book of poems, *Address to the Living*. He is on the faculty of Tufts College.

R N CURREY was born in South Africa in 1907, educated at Oxford, and now lives in Colchester, Essex. A book of his poems, *Tiresias*, was published in this country last year by the Oxford University Press.

LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL, of New York City, has been a contributor since 1920. A new book of her poems, *Dawn in Snow*, will be published in September by Dutton.

EDITH HENRICH was born in New Jersey, educated at Barnard, and now lives in Williams Bay, Wis., where her husband is on the staff of Yerkes Observatory. She was introduced to our readers in 1935 as Edith Klem.

THOMAS CALDECOT CHUBB, the well-known writer and editor, is now living in Greenwich, Conn. He is the author of several books of poems, including *The White God*, *Cliff Pace*, *Kyrdoon*, etc.

DANIEL SMYTHE, of Haverhill, Mass., has contributed poems to various magazines, including POETRY.

HELEN GOLDBAUM, now living in Denver, was introduced in our September 1939 issue. Her work is represented in the young poets' anthology, *Trial Balances*.

ALAN ROOK is a young English poet. His work has appeared so far only in student magazines.

Of this month's prose contributors, all but Mrs Bond have appeared previously:

KARL J. SHAPIRO, who contributed the leading group of poems to our July issue, is a young Baltimore writer now serving in the Army at Camp Lee, Va. HAROLD ROSENBERG, a New York writer, is at pres-

ent working as an editor of the WPA Writers Program in Washington. EUNICE TIETJENS, who has been on the POETRY staff since 1916, is the author of many books of poems and prose. JUDITH S. BOND is curator of the Harriet Monroe Library of Modern Poetry at the University of Chicago. EDOUARD RODITI, at present on the faculty of the University of Kansas City, has been a frequent contributor to periodicals here and abroad. H. R. HAYS, of New York City, is well known to our readers as poet, critic, and translator. F. C. WEISKOPF, now living in the United States, is one of the leading Czech writers. AMY BONNER, our Eastern Business Representative, contributes poems and criticism to magazines and is a New York correspondent and editorial writer for the *Christian Science Monitor*.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE

- 50 *Poems*, by E. E. Cummings. Duell, Sloan and Pearce.
The Young Men and the Old, by Stuart Cloete. Houghton Mifflin Co.
Veterans, by Donagh MacDonagh. Cuala Press, Dublin, Ireland.
Paper Faces, by Nelson Del Bittner. James A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.
Island and Time, by Allen Curnow. The Caxton Press, Christchurch, New Zealand.
Hue and Cry, by Herbert Bruncken. Prairie Press, Muscatine, Ia.
Salute to the New-born, by Loker Raley. Loker Raley, N. Y. C.
Flashing Wings, by William Plumer Fowler. Bruce Humphries, Boston.
Small Boy Memories, by H. V. Gard. Bruce Humphries.
The Well, by Barbara Gibbs. Alan Swallow, Albuquerque, N. M.
Songs for the Winds, by Glen Coffield. Candor Magazine, Puxico, Mo.
Patria, by L. H. Allen. Melbourne Univ. Press, Melbourne, Australia.
Confidence, by Frank Gates. Priv. ptd., Seattle, Wash.
The Ballad of the 13,000,000, by Paul X. Hall. Priv. ptd., Chicago.
Messages of Spring, by Mabel Carol Rickenbacher Lilliefors. Priv. ptd., Great Kills, L. I., N. Y.
Ad Valorem, Rhymed Improvisations, by A. Safroni-Middleton. World Wide Press, London.

ANTHOLOGY, PROSE AND A PLAY

- Ten Old English Poems*, put into modern English alliterative verse by Kemp Malone. Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore.
Rainer Maria Rilke, by E. M. Butler. Macmillan Co.
Emma, by Marion Morse MacKaye. Macmillan.

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JOE HORRELL: *Some Notes on Conversion in
Poetry*

R. W. SHORT *The Tower beyond Tragedy*
[The poetry of Robinson Jeffers]

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P O E T R Y

A M A G A Z I N E O F V E R S E

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NO. VI

SEPTEMBER 1941

AMERICA 1941

AMERICA 1941

WESTERN MUSE, who by the curved prow over
The salty water wandered from the edge
Of hungering Europe to this country where
All through long June bees ride the ruddy clover,
Wild dogwood dangles from the Catskill ledge
And goldenrod is more a flower than the rose,
More native autumn-colored—let the live air
Be in my lungs no song drier than drouth
Or corn leaves brittle when the cold wind blows,
Tongue's touch worn from the words. Give me a way,
The power of plain talk in a plain man's mouth,
To tell the marvelous horror of our day.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

I cannot ask my tongue to cheat the eye,
Naming alone the mounting meadowlark
When the blue bird-way gleams where the bombers fly.
I will not range in any measured rime
Only the child's night cry, dreading the dark,
The wind's voice varied with the altering suns,
When the true sound and temper of our time
Is the gigantic arrogance of guns.

Muse of muskies lashing the Minnesota
Lake, of Alabama pine growing
Green from the red earth, the Dismal Swamp
Gray with old water, golden Dakota
Wheat tall with the early autumn sowing,
Utah range brown as a sunburned face—
How can I praise you without hollow pomp
When on our same round world, balanced in space
As on a trained seal's nose a turning ball,
All blacked-out Europe, crouched for the bomb's thud,
Colors its eyes only with the tall
Smoke of its burning home, its crawling blood?

Muse of American summer when days start
Full of vacation laughter, free of the clock
To loaf in hills where the honey locust hums—
How, in a heartless age, can I find heart
To praise the brilliant morning and not mock
The dread of continents when daylight comes
Laying the land bare to the bomber's chart?

Muse of our time, let my talk be act.
It's too late now to make the frightened head
An air raid shelter walled by the skull's tough bone
To will away the brute, exploding fact.
Mind, believe what my candid eyes have shown.
Truth, be in my mouth as daily bread.

Muse of American men, help me find
Words that will tell the wonder of this place,
Continent bounded by the gray gull's flight,
Where liberty now nourishes the mind
As blood makes bone alive and gives eyes sight—
And find those lands where the already blind
Tear freedom from a man as eyes from his face,
Taking away hope and the loved light.

While in these days over our harvest field
A long wind twitches the lion-tawny wheat,
Let each word leave my mouth like autumn yield,
Grain ripened in the sun and good to eat.
I want the natural wisdom of a child
To tell the pity of Europe's people now,
Common men and women, proud of the piled
Manure in their yard, the calf dropped by their cow;
All those in cities hoping for a raise,
A new house out where the kids had room to play,
Those desperate for a job in the feared days,
Young girls doing their hair the latest way.

Now while on their face continual sorrows

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Fall and are not turned back by any hand,
Give me the aviator's metal eye
To hunt bright hope beyond the rainy sky,
To find beyond river and hill tomorrow's
Flying weather and a field to land.

ON THE BIRTH OF MY CHILD

Daring are women who in a time of death
Give, all meaning narrowed to gun and knife,
To willess, human child first blood and breath,
With so great cost creating cheapened life.
Yet always to the proud and howling plane
A wordless child will living answer utter,
In the frail wrist but membrane-thin maintain
The pulse's powerful and tidelike flutter.

Let the child flourish, let his light eyes float
On heavy air. Let him, waking alone
In a dark house, defy his own defeat,
Taking murderous midnight by the throat
With hands of long and intellectual bone.
In his time let him taste the metal meat.

ELEMENTS

Beneath a burning star,
On a green earth I stand;
Good and evil are
My right and my left hand.

I wear, against my death,
Live flesh and bone in layer;
Every easy breath
Is prodigal of prayer.

Sight runs through my head
And out my hand in act.
My faithful mind is led
Through fantasy of fact.

I know what elements
Of rain and root and wheat
Combine to give me sense
Of nerve and body heat.

Yet when I think of sun
And earth that made me human
I name not these but one
Now old and weary woman

Who calmed a sick child's cry
With autumn-blooming herb
And healed its terror by
The ordinary verb.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Keep your accounts, he urged, on your thumb nail,
Let your affairs be only two or three,
Accept, if days demand, the jealous jail
To prove the need of pure simplicity
Suck all the marrow out of life and try
To dare the now as carefully as cattle
Enter the daily field, feel when you die
Your feet grow colder, hear your own throat rattle.

Whittle the wooden years with pocket knife,
Be free of heaven and in no man's bond,
Hold natural form, as a dog's tail its true
Curve, in desperate quiet lead your life,
A plain man dwelling proudly by a pond
Watching the sun down, moon down, earth down too.

EMILY DICKINSON

Demonic Yankee who could taste
In daily bread eternity,
Wary of words and the nerve's waste,
True spinster of mortality.
Drunk with the unbrewed midnight air,
Wandering on her garden gravel,
She harrowed her own home to dare
An inner continent for travel.

Narrow in her salt blood she bore
The seven seas and their loud lash,
Gay at her girlhood waist she wore
World wrapped around her like a sash.
With death she put a wool coat on
For warmth, and walked into the sun.

CONTRARY

As a tree's upward might
Is inner strength to bark,
So on your face the light
Comes from an inward dark.

I know the dreadful pain
That would your days dishevel,
And how by wilder strain
You hold your walking level.

It is by warmth of nerve,
Bare heat that bodies hold,
Our minds our lives may serve
With thought abstract and cold.

Your living unity
No opposites defy:
Inner intensity
Gives ease to hand and eye.

LETTER AFTER DROUTH

That weather held. From a defiant south
The hot air driven, burning face and field.
Cloud and never rain, the only sound
A hard continual cough of harried leaves.
On wrinkled hill of brain the waving heat.
Strange in summer the growing gone from earth,
Beneath our feet the plowed land turning iron,
Beyond our mouth the constant leaf complaining,
Brown as your hair the grass.

Merely one bird
Made dry song from a damp tongue, the cricket
Droned under rock its cooling cry.

The rains
Fell again on green, my heavy foot
Broke in harvest field the bending wheat.
I thought of early summer, the bare days
When outer weather balanced inner will.
Then the remembered flow of your tongue talking
Drew to the mind's drouth liquid nourishment.
My clean hands gave you thanks.

Out of its black
Fertility the ground brings golden food.
Even in thirst the whitened roots of wheat
Will form against our hunger their frail furrow.
So is creation the earth's constancy.
Yet all not new.

What we as live men need
Is a long continuity of nerve,

A mood handled by mind and held in blood,
A late conviction of an older truth
Wiser than any weather

Call it love

We change forever to its former self—
Word of an antique burden, worn with breath,
Yet uttered always through the urgent years
By women walking under midnight trees,
By men calling that one sound from a room.

Now I recall the manner of your mouth
Filling with eager talk that empty field,
My vacant hands.

Now in the yellow year,

The sun no longer arrogant, the ground
Gone iron again, all day the lazy snow
Falling like ashes from an old man's pipe,
Toward your warm words the chill mind leaning, tongue
Tasting the ripened memory of your name,
I wait in ease the wear of winter, knowing
None in the long autumn days so lucky
Having for harvest the heart's certainty.

Paul Engle

T W O P O E M S

THE FIVE DREAMS

My former comrades were ringing the bell downstairs:
"You know we only gave you the one chance more,
Why didn't you come to the meeting?" was what they said;
They threatened to kill my son; I wouldn't go to the door:
The number thirty-three was in it somehow.

The bull that had killed seven horses turned into a man,
Came in the house, with a minotaur mask, and spoke:
"How would you like me to throw you on your back?"
"Oh, please don't do it, I wouldn't like it," I said.
But he bore me down with his weight, and before I woke,
I called on people to help me; I thought they would.

I was in a Nazi palace, marble and black,
Like a men's room in a club, or a smart hotel,
With hangings worse than the Kaiser's Corfu home;
The guards, in their dark blue suits, on all the floors,
Were not so rude; they told me how to get out,
But I never found the lawn, or the proper doors.

Someone was fighting with me, all night long;
I didn't know who it was, but I couldn't sleep,
Nor wake, nor win; and then I was ploughing a field
In heavy ground; the share went hard and deep;
It was hard work holding hard.

I went to the doctor to take another test,

Thinking perhaps I might have come back too soon;
It was called the Test of the Wreath, and I had to sit
With laurel and olive and oak around my brow,
But I must have known the answer before I said,
"Do you think I am better now?"

THE STATUE

Some say it must have been a horrible face,
Worse than Medusa's, to turn him into stone,
Standing so motionless, with rigid gaze,
In attitude so much unlike his own,
So much unlike his old athletic ways.

Some call him a male Niobe, whom pride
Made hard and chill, and sorrow overcast,
And manhood, with ambition broken, died
So the first tear he wept became his last,
Poor statue, junk and rubbish of the past.

Some say No, no, but pull and counter-pull
Of our confusing social scheme combined
To put a spell upon him, made him dull
And petrified the body and the mind.

Others are half inclined to disagree:
Granting that conflict was the cause, they claim
It came from deep inside; — what difference, though?
External or intrinsic, all the same;
The effect is all the same.

And so, like frightened children in the park,
In order not to see the hideous cast,
They walk another way; or what is worse
Go by insensitive without remark;
Some pity, others curse.

How do they know? how can they be so sure?
Dare they come close enough to recognize
The vision of the blank and awful eyes
Intent on incorruptible art alone;
Or hear, with him, the music, bright and pure;
Or feel, more sure than ever, the red heart
Beating in new composure under the stone.

Rolfe Humphries

TO VIOLET

with prewar poems

These tracings from a world that's dead
Take for my dust-smothered Pyramid.
Count the sharp study and long toil
As pavements laid for worms to soil.
You, without knowing it, might tread
The grass where my foundation's laid;
Your, or another's, house be built
Where my mossed, weathered stones lie spilt;
And this unread memento be
The only lasting part of me.

Basil Bunting

RANGE, RANGE THE WORDS AROUND

Nature is full of rhymes.
So is man's head.
In these, the evil times
The silly, the half-dead
Hum while committing crimes,—
And so to bed.

Bloody old couch. I'll write
No rhymes to pleasure such,—
Odd phrases for the night.
Wash hands to quit their touch,
Fix eyes to out-stare sight
And not say much.

Or say their guilt is mine.
The bloody couch mine too.
And have her in to dine,—
The colossal strumpet who
Spills guilt with the old wine
And the idiot new.

Range, range the words around.
How shall we fix the scale?
Long silence and no sound,
And all the risk to fail.
Then on new ground
Begin the tale.

Genevieve Taggard

THREE POEMS

THE ERROR OF THE TYRANT

That stolid Spartan fables shall redeem
Flexed muscle, not the ductile tear's esteem,
Is fundamental error we confound.
Where treacherous simplicities redound
Sharp horn, stiff drum, beware
The grief in the fault of hollow-angled air
No calculate of bloodshed can repair.

Incarnate ghosts have sturdily reproved
The reason's angled neatness. Though, removed
From multiple men, the master can compel
Impersonal the pinpoint, troubled swell
As we assemble; so the hidden rise,
Accumulate air defending mobile eyes
Of those whom he, too late, shall recognize.

IN TIME OF CIVIL WARS

Hammer this in metal
Cut it in stone
These were the wars
Of man with man.

Not state against empire
Cyclic fell.
Heart against head
Contested all.

Heads were the rebels
Hearts beat slow.
The earth divided
Though lords were few.

Times' redemption
Mind scarce believes.
The still hearts trust
Their love survives.

IF NONE WILL LISTEN

If none will listen
Not one
Said the son of Melchisedek
Tell your vision
To a stone.

The time comes
Said the son of Melchisedek
When the willful and scornful
Shall lie down
Upon stone

And beg stone for a vision
And rather be stone than a man fleeing
Denying and dying.
Speak among stones
Said the son of Melchisedek.

Jeremy Ingalls

TWO POEMS

LOCAL SOUTH

Pity Pietra Lefkowicz Schmies
Scrubbing the office of Ed. J. Kelly
His stairs are of steel and his walls are of marble
She scrubs his urinal on her knees.

Pity all such on their knees in Chicago
Pity all cabbies without a fare,
Pity the sick thief seeking a bondsman
Pity the city where Kelly is mayor.

The neon sign in the funeral home
Burns jade beside a potted palm,
A hatless drunk in an arc-lamp's light
Confides to the lamp the Fourteenth Psalm.

It is twenty to two by the potted palm
It is twenty to two in the best hotel,
It is twenty to two by a hatless drunk
It is twenty to two on the Lake Street El.

What time will it be when the last El crashes?
What time will it be in the funeral home?
Will a neon sign by a potted palm
Light a hatless drunk to a crumbling tomb?

Go home, Pietra Lefkowicz Schmies
Grab the Lake Street El and crawl into bed,
The wall is falling behind your mop
The floor is falling beneath your knees.

HOW LONG BLUES

Have a beer on me, brother, tomorrow I'm sobering up
This is the final floor show, so let's have bottoms up—
The place is closing tomorrow, friend, and won't open again
 very soon,
The M.C. and the bartender are joining an air platoon
The strip-tease number and her six blonde cuties
Are all signed up for USO duties
The 26-girl and the handsome drummer
Will be sleeping in separate beds come summer
The checkroom nifty has quit to knit lisle
The bouncer's bad eye will defer him a while—
So let's hear the *How Long Blues* once again,
Play it over and over while stirring your gin—

To tell us the night is long, as long,
As the long derisive rhythms of a rain
That taps cold mockeries all night
Against a lightless pane.

Nelson Algren

SIX POEMS

JEW

Babies have no special history.
Born, you were rosy and round, gurgled like any other,
horizon was mother's breast and father's chucking finger,
peeped from your bunting, saw only the friendly sky
Crawling, the world enlarged to father's watch
fat as a golden moon in the fairy tale,
innocent blocks spelt out no tattling word,
and even raised to high-chair the scene was cheery
nursery walls in pink or charming blue,
Jack and Jill the only handwriting there.

While you were yet young, however, the swag was stolen.
You were blamed.

At school the children stumbled over your name;
you were never the Prince in games. Always your nose
made you Rumpelstilzkin or the Dwarf.
Your father's cap was queer (But freckles are queer,
too, and red hair, and *your* father drinks too much!)

No matter. The money was never found, let's call him Ike the
Thief.

Ike, modern clubmember of the Lost Tribes of Israel:
lost, yes, but not your ancestry.
It was the glittering swag never found,
all these million years: and you're to blame of course.

Oh I grant
they could have blamed the snake in Eden, the apple,
or even dirty goat grazing on the garbage;
rain might have been victim, earthquake, or suspect fire,
indigestion, dreams, roses, or constipation.
But they chose the Jew. Surely your rabbi
read you the Hebrews were God's anointed race?
Now how would you like to take yours: mixed or straight?
We are sorry to inform you our enrollment is complete.
No Dogs or Jews Allowed.

Someday when the swag is found, you can cancel kike
and nigger, wop, hunky, chink, and okie.
But just now the chances look very slim;
the swag is either underground too deep
to drill, or too high for the heavenliest plane.
Maybe, quite sensibly, it was never even lost,
but the myth continues, a colossal Judge Crater,
Kidd's map, the virgin birth, life on the moon.

I ANONYMOUS

Do not believe Tithonus wished to go.
Romeo too was fake.
The poet did not mean to take
the hemlock. Columbus was terrified
as the least and stuttering novice at his side.
Franklin flew his kite

and prayed. Voltaire, over-bright,
tried to parry it
with wit. Shelley was an accident
and thereby went
only a little quick.

Many name Love the trick,
and Eliot joined the Church but ages anyway.
Lenin lies in wax.
The collected volume lacks
the active pen of Yeats.
I more anonymous and alive, to their all a small tithe,
share with identical fear their desperate great straits.

DITTY FOR DEPARTING TROOPS

Keep your eye fixed normally on woe:
War solves problems, ends with armistice.
When Honor is at Stake we Gladly Go.
The victor's rose will flower on our grave, for Justice
under her bloody blindfold is wide awake we know.

THE DEMOCRATIC DIME

This perfect hospital to every ill
is democratic for a dime;
all needs ring equal, and to each
solution in due time.

Creams for the loveless, scrapbooks for the old,
countless cellophane joys;
idiot kewpies for the girls,
dead soldiers for the boys.

Polish for the spot, a plug for the leak,
one hundred solitaire games to win;
for all the goodluck elephant ashtray,
and the godlike safety pin.

FUNERAL SERVICE

As we poor outnumber the rich, so evil days to good.
Yet we recall the Sunday picnic antless now
and free of the suit-spotting cloudburst; in memory
the spurned kiss sweet and honeyheavy moment.
Recall too that brilliant episode: Joy
Of The First Paycheck before it became butter,
electric light, shoes, rent, and the dentist.
So this dead man, human as any of us,
ignoring his hall bedroom, the yearlong days
of meaningless degrading job, the fear-flayed nights,
later the pain and worse no-pain of hypodermic—
weeps for his circumstance, wishes to rise
among the mourners hypocrite and hysterical
packed too tight into the rancid room
burdened with foolish flowers and this memo of our own fate.

IMAGINE YOURSELF

Imagine yourself the fairly affluent tourist
reclining semi-Roman in the parlor car;
luggage, your outer self, bestowed about you
neat as a knife.

Later, from those geometric measures
(clasped securely, you with only key
for QED) will draw your daintiness:
clean shirt.

Reflective palm on chin, affirm the pastoral
windowed without or (better) deny with a good
detective book where fate comes cleaner than to
the scraggling farmer.

At destination, deeds to be performed
bring blush of victory; room register,
impressive as a treaty, requests your trumpeted
flourish of pen.

Name: Time From Where: To Here: Date.
Nib like a rider over the naked page
races absolute and sure, for you
know all the answers.

Vivid as nightmare everything comes true.
The hotel room clicks open to your touch
brisk as a bellboy; icewater, tub, towel
wait like a wife.

The gracious map on the gracious desk from the gracious
manager points out the pleasure spots;
valet, barber, blonde chambermaid are at your beck
easy as death.

View is all you wished and more beside;
for knowing you will not be here long, will not
return soon (if ever), the charm increases like passion,
past, or peace.

Eve Merriam

SOJOURN IN VERMONT

In country marble under grass
Where summer still remembers snow,
The history of cold has left
A reticence remote and slow;

And there the tongue is provident
With silence at the source of speech,
Restricting honor to a code
Revealed emotion cannot reach.

There under elms in glacial light
Survival forced me to atone:
The heart exchanged its rich excess
For starker sanity of stone.

Israel Smith

TEHUANTEPEC JOURNEY

The mottled land
crouches between the sierras,
where the stone gods grin in the darkness of their dream,
the forgotten darkness under the gray-green hills.

These towns that cling to the cable of steel track
lest they drown in the jungle that was not made for man,
bear names of rebels and martyrs, and of saints:
Matías Romero, San Jerónimo, Jesús Carranza—
and the way creeps on over the slow dark rivers scrawling
a secret sign across the impassive face of the forest . . .

past the houses on stilts, like spiders stalking the river mud,
the handsaw patiently scratching the monstrous log,
the water-barrel labeled "For Fire Only," containing—sawdust;
and the hut of thatch that is bannered "Karl Marx School"

to the Hill of the Tiger, the lacquered gourds piled high with
flowers, and the bathing women,
thigh-deep and nude, waving careless hands at the passing train;
the passion-red tunics, gold-embroidered over the gold-brown skin,
and the bright strands of wool lighting the fluent hair.

Do they remember the carved gods in the jungle mounds,
who wait, smiling a timeless, a secret smile?
This is a secret land, and its men are weary
with the slow years, the unutterable burden of it;
bled deep with old battles, worn with breeding. Here
only the women keep the strength of the ancient soil

from which old sorrows mourn that are written
in the angular chiseled serpent-stones of the dead.

And the dark cry that sounds from the jungle night
is the cry that flames in their level, sun-deep eyes,
tameless and proud as the tiger whose name they bear.

So the way winds over the worn bones of the land,
the dark vein-streams of its thought,
to the Bay of the Marqués, the beautiful loneliness
that looks to the vast, the unpredictable South . . .

and the bones of the conquerors cry out, denying rest.

Clifford Gessler

OPAQUE CLOUDS

Flanging chests of Géricault horses rear
Against vermillion pastures spread
On laps of western sky-peaked hills
Familiar to each proud winched head:

Hitch my mind to no stanch stall,
No taut rein draw, no halt command;
Let him cling flamed silk-flung manes
Fierce stallions flash from mountain land.

Bob Miller

TWO POEMS

A POLAR WORD

These I elected, these I chose:
The north wind and the bitter snows,
The east wind and the icy rain.
Never again, oh, never again
The warm south wind, the genial sun,
The western air when day is done!
These blow indeed in other climes,
But not for me, nor for my times.

There was a region lying south
Untouched of storm, unstirred of drouth,
Where the great meadows, facing west
Were always fertile, always blest;
None hungered there, nor was afraid,
And if he sought it, there was shade
Which his own honest effort made.

O lost, beloved homeland! Where-
Soever now I needs must fare,
Whatever ill my heart contends,
What wealth of foes, what dearth of friends,
Still shall my arm be sinewed strong,
Still shall I fight, these foes among,
For your sweet sake who understood
How men may leave the heart's best good
For sterner issues, bearing thence
Their own inviolate consequence.

Drive harder, wind! Pierce colder, frost!
O sullen skies, I am not lost!
Derange my compass, still my goal
Shall be the same uncharted pole
Which I shall find, where I shall stand
With truth and love on either hand,
The taste of honey in my mouth,
And every needle pointing south!

IN THE PARK

Once in the park I saw on a sweet May morning
Three men asleep in spite of the glowing sun;
Unkempt, unshaven, huddled beneath the lilacs,
Sullen, fordone.

Drunken no doubt they were, and worthless, and lazy.
One need not be sentimental—here was no tragedy—
But nevertheless my throat grew tight to behold them
Dreaming so heavily .

For they lay defenseless. Staring at every comer
Were the poor tattered remnants to which they clung,
Whether of pride or of garments. Relaxed, unwatchful, they
slumbered,
Innocent . . . Strangely young. . .

What is life's mercy for these men defeated?
What is life's one compassion for their woe?
Only this heavy sleep with its dream of springtime
And the long road yet to go!

Josephine Johnson

THREE POEMS

THE RECURRENCE

All things return, Nietzsche said,
The ancient wheel revolves again,
Rise, take up your numbered fate;
The cradle and the bridal bed,
Life and the coffin wait.
All has been that ever can be
And this sole eternity
Cannot alter, cannot add
One to your delights and tears,
Or a million million years
Tear the nightmare from the mad.

Have no fear then. You will miss
Achievement by the selfsame inch,
When the great occasion comes
And they watch you you will flinch,
Lose the moment, be for bliss
A footlength short. All done before.
Love's agonies, victory's drums
Will not huddle the Cross away,
Planted on its future hill.
The secret on the appointed day
Will be made known, the ship once more
Hit against the waiting rock
Or come safely to the shore,
Careless under the deadly tree
The victim drowse, the urgent warning

Come too late, the dagger strike,
Strike and strike through eternity,
And world's hence the prison clock
Will toll on execution morning,
What is ill be always ill,
Wretches die behind a dike,
And the happy be happy still

But the heart makes reply:
This is only what the eye
From its tower on the turning field
Sees and sees and cannot tell why,
Quarterings on the turning shield,
The great non-stop heraldic show.
And the heart and the mind know,
What has been can never return,
What is not will surely be
In the changed unchanging reign,
Else the Actor on the Tree
Would loll at ease, miming pain,
And counterfeit mortality.

THE GROVE

There was no road at all to that high place
But through the smothering grove,
Where as we went the shadows wove
Adulterous shapes of animal hate and love,
The idol crowded nightmare Space,
Wood beyond wood, tree behind tree,
And every tree an empty face

Gashed by the zigzag lightning mark
The first great Luciferian animal
Scored on clay and leaf and bark.
This was, we knew, the heraldic ground,
And therefore now we heard our footsteps fall
With the true legendary sound,
Like secret trampling behind a wall,
As if they were saying To be, to be

And oh, the silence, the drugged thicker dozing
Deep in its dream of fear,
The ring closing
And coming near,
The well-bred self-sufficient animals
With clean rank pelts and proud and fetid breath,
Screaming their arrogant calls,
Their moonstone eyes set straight at life and death.
Did we see or dream it? And the jungle cities—
For there were cities there and civilizations,
Deep in the forest; powers and dominations
Like shapes created by dreaming animals,
Proud animal's dreams uplifted high,
Booted and saddled on the animal's back
And staring with the arrogant animal's eye:
The golden dukes, the silver earls, and gleaming black
The curvetting knights sitting their curvetting steeds,
The sweet silk-tunicked eunuchs singing ditties,
Swaying like wandering weeds,
The scarlet cardinals,
And lions high in the air on the banner's field,

Crowns, sceptres, spears and stars and moons of blood,
And sylvan wars in bronze within the shield,
All quartered in the wide world's wood,
The smothering grove where there was place for pities.

We trod the maze like horses in a mill
And then passed through it
As in a dream of the will.
How could it be? There was the stifling grove,
Yet here was light; what wonder led us to it?
How could the blind road go
To climb the crag and top the towering hill
And all that splendor spread? We only know
There was no road except the smothering grove.

THE FINDER FOUND

Will you, sometime, who have sought so long, and seek
Still in the slowly darkening searching-ground,
Catch sight some ordinary month or week
Of that rare prize you hardly thought you sought—
The gatherer gathered and the finder found,
The buyer who would buy all himself well bought—
And perch in pride in the buyer's hand, at home,
And there, the prize, in freedom rest and roam?

Edwin Muir

NEW TRENDS IN SOVIET RUSSIAN POETRY

THE GREAT Russian poets of the pre-revolutionary years, the revolution itself and the brief period of transition which followed it, were Alexander Blok, Sergei Essenin, Vladimir Maiakovsky and Boris Pasternak. Our knowledge of sovietic poetry, in the West, is almost exclusively limited to the work of these four; yet they were all mature artists before the revolution began. Blok died in 1921, Essenin in 1925, Maiakovsky in 1930; Pasternak alone, of these whom Russians already consider classics, is still alive. In a way, too, they are already outmoded, Maiakovsky perhaps more than the other two who died before him. Their poetry bears the mark of a concluded era which prepared the revolution, achieved it and then had to adjust itself to new conditions. Is there already a truly post-revolutionary poetry in Russia, any literature which has been entirely conditioned and formed by the new order?

Among more recent Soviet poets none can be compared to the four great poets of the preceding generation. Poetry, in Russia, has either tended to stress its unpoetic elements and contents or to develop vaster and more all-embracing literary forms; the lyric has thus been abandoned in favor of the versified novel (Kirsanov, Selvinsky), the folkloristic allegory, legend or fairy-tale (Tvardovsky, Svetlov), or the verse-drama (Selvinsky). The legendary allegory or fairy-tale, of course, preserves the most obviously lyrical character. Yet lyricism, which was so typical of Russian literature of all times, has lost ground in the past fifteen years. Feeling and thought are now more often expressed in neo-realistic novels.

The development of Soviet literature falls, as we see it today,

in three distinct periods. First, the period of destruction, an immediate emanation of the revolution itself; then the return towards the reality of experience, during the first years of socialist reconstruction; finally, a search for synthetic neo-realism, expressing utopian tendencies, as a revolt against the earlier photographic realism, which had proved unsatisfactory. This third period represents an attempt to combine synthetically the achievements of the two earlier periods. If this attempt succeeds, it will prove that literature, although subjected to rigidly unartistic or antiartistic principles, is still necessary enough, to Russian life and life in any community, to survive even the most unfavorable disciplines.

The first period, of destruction of old forms, social or artistic, and of great hope for the immediate birth of a completely new and better order, was a great age of poetry, enthusiastically hopeful songs, revolutionary drunkenness and eccentricity, utopian slogans, epically conceived programs. While the novel lost all its flesh and blood, the lyric, anarchic or programmatic, rose to unprecedented heights. There were suddenly hundreds of poets; but Blok, Essenin, Maiakovsky and Pasternak illustrate the most important tendencies of this turbulent age.

Blok, the symbolist, subtle representative of the old "intelligentsia," poet of undertones, the delicate reactions and impressions of a supersensitive and almost bodiless soul, was overwhelmed by the Revolution and broken by it. Yet his great poem, *The Twelve*, is certainly the most powerful poetic expression of the Revolution itself. His conception of the event was anarchic and romantic: he saw only the destruction of the old order and proclaimed its necessity.

Essenin, blue-eyed peasant poet, also saw this destruction.

But he always felt that this was his element, since it brought hope to the peasants. Whether or not the ruin of his hope was the cause of his suicide need not be discussed here. In his time, Essenin was the most lyrical of all, because he could express himself only lyrically. He neither created a school nor did he belong to one; but all the peasant poets of today are his followers, though they never rise to his heights.

Maiakovsky, the hero, the antithesis of Blok and Essenin, created endless slogans for the Revolution, expanded his tremendous ego beyond all possible limits. He preached the future order and thought he was being active in its construction.

Pasternak is the poet of the old "intelligentsia" who has survived the Revolution and adapted himself to the new order. Thoroughly Western, he belongs, in spite of the undeniable influence of the Revolution on his emotional outlook and his work, to the history of modern European poetry, such as it has been since 1900. He is, in many respects, closer to Rilke than to many of his colleagues in Soviet Russia.

A rapid sociological analysis of contemporary Russian poetry reveals three distinct groups, very exactly determined: the so-called proletarian poets, the "poputciki" or fellow-travelers, the bourgeois poets. The largest of these is the proletarian group, whose general attitude is characterized by a lack of any ultimate problems since, to the orthodox, the Revolution has solved all problems, artistic as well as sociological. These poets are invariably and monotonously enthusiastic about everything that is being accomplished in the most perfect of all worlds. Kirilov, Alexandrovsky, Kasin, the oldest of this group, and also a whole army of younger poets, all have their ideological roots, of course, in the first period of action and enthusiasm. But how long

can one live on this? Too much cheap accordion-music, whether in village or in factory-yard, and too little human reality, have come of it. Human reality cannot be expressed in basic lyrical emotions, those of a cloudless, shadowless and problemless world. All the too-happy love-lyrics of the proletarian school are dull. The poetry of the village and of the factory has all faded away, except when it has remained purely lyrical and faithful to old literary forms.

Indeed, the reality of life, in Soviet Russia, has been proved to be more complex than the proletarian poets would lead us to believe. We find an adequate reflection of this complexity in the very interesting development of the neo-realistic novel. Still, there was talent among the proletarians. The most interesting of them is probably Alexander Tvardovsky, a peasant who represents some new tendencies, simple and lyrical, with a new simplicity, that of folklore. A true poet, he cannot remain unproblematic. He is the poet of the collective farm; his major work, a sort of allegorical legend developed as an epic, *The Land Muravia* (1937), shows the conflict between two generations of peasants, the old man still dreaming of his own piece of land and the new generation which is born to live and work in the Kolhoz. In spite of its fairy-tale form¹ and ready-made happy ending, when the naïve dreamer and individualist finds his way to the kolhoz, Tvardovsky's poem reveals a great feeling for the reality of the Russian peasant's life. Creating with love and tenderness his "mujičok" Morgunok, the poet yet sees him without false sentimentality, idealizing not the individual but

¹*Harmonica*, a Soviet movie shown in this country some five years ago, illustrates well how fairy-tale, the legend and the folklore allegory, in another artistic medium, have been adapted to serve the new Soviet order

his unconscious, overwhelming, humanly beautiful and humble love of work. When Tvardovsky describes the century-old and unaltered toil of the peasant, he is at his best; also where, through the unfalsified naïveté of Morgunok, the dreamer seeking his humble peasant paradise of Muravia, he sees nature. The earth, endless yet limited, warm and black, "crumbling like a piece of cake," is the true hero of *The Land Muravia*. Without his love of the earth and of the Russian soil, Morgunok would not exist, just as he would not be himself without his passionate devotion to his gray horse.

The earth,
She runs and runs
A thousand miles ahead;
The skylark trembles over her
And sings of her.
The earth,
More beautiful and more to see,
She lays around;
There is no happiness more great
Than to live on her until you die.
The earth,
To the West and East
And North and South. . .
Morgunok wants to fall down and embrace her
But his arms are too short . . .

In this Russian Whitmanism, derived to a great extent from Tolstoi, one discovers the taste and the color, the very pattern of the new and strong patriotism which has been developed in literature by the proletarian school. As a whole, it is a new trend in Russian literature, and Tvardovsky expresses it in his poetry.

The second group, and the most important, is that of the fellow-travelers, who do not create a bridge between two extreme groups, proletarian and bourgeois, but are rather very eager to

disconnect themselves from the bourgeois group. Oceans of criticism have been devoted to the fellow-travelers, first to define the term, then to place poets in this category and thereby degrade them. From the orthodox point of view, "fellow-traveler" is not a compliment, though it is, of course, much better than "bourgeois." The latter, the "bourgeois" writers of Soviet Russia, have also been called the "internal emigration." Spiritually, they are closely related to the actual émigrés of Paris and elsewhere, the intelligentsia of the old order. Achmatova, Belij, and Brusov are poets of the Soviet bourgeois school, Zamjatin, Pilniak, Sergeev-Zensky and Ehrenburg its prose-writers. They know how to write and, of course, the post-revolutionary poets and prose-writers have learned much from them. But they belong to the past, whether alive or dead, whether abroad or in Russia.

A new and different intelligentsia is that of the fellow-travelers, who are all much younger and belong to the bespectacled, respectable and sensible élite, but one which was formed anew during and after the Revolution. With all good will and sincerity, they try to keep up with change. All of them would be glad to forget their personal problems, which persecute them constantly like Furies, but this is beyond their power. To a certain extent they are outcasts, because usually they are not children of peasants or workers and especially because they are still individualists; they have spiritual problems and try to solve them. Their chief problem is not new: the relationship of individual to society. Of course the most interesting writers in Soviet Russia are the fellow-travelers; the greatest among them are Leonid Leonov, a prose-writer, and Ilja Selvinsky, the poet.

Selvinsky's effort at construction are very similar to neo-

realist prose. In him, poetry and prose join in a common search for new outlets and means of expression. His poetry achieves something vaster than mere chamber-music. He began to write in the early twenties, in the Bohemian style of the cabarets and of Essenin. But he was a dreamer and his first important book, very much discussed, was *Uljalaevischina* (1927), which he calls an epic. *Komandarm 2* (1930), *Pushtorg* (1931), *Pacific Ocean Verses* (1934), *Pao-Pao* (1932), *Lyrics* (1939), followed in rapid succession. His latest work is an interesting verse-tragedy, *Knight John* (1939). He is the chief representative of constructivism, a school whose theoretician is K. Zelinsky, the only one of the many schools of literature which has survived without merging again with the undying proletarian school—from which everything springs, in Russia, and to which everything returns. Constructivism has survived while the imagists, the acmeists, and even the futurists faded away. Its theory, retical nonsense of other schools; but the constructivists happen to include some talented poets, Selvinsky, Bagritzky and Lugovskoi, and their practical effort, based on a few fundamental theoretical declarations, has managed to be truly constructive while the theory itself has been as delirious as that of other schools which have not survived.

As a poetical movement, constructivism springs from futurism, but has since found a way back to reality. Together with the futurists, the constructivists fought the bloodless poetical sentiment which was the legacy of Russian symbolism; later, turning against futurism too, they fought the latter's empty slogans, abstract and anthropomorphic cosmic tendencies, doomed to remain empty. The theory of constructivism has not been victorious, but Selvinsky as a poet has succeeded. The

central idea of constructivism is that all means of expression and description, in poetry, should be concentrated around the theme of the poem and notions determined by the theme. The poem's content must remain dominant: a dictatorship of content is proclaimed, and the poem's theme must be developed and constructed out of its basic meaning and sense. It is an anti-futuristic and anti-formalistic reaffirmation of the contents of poetry. Anti-lyrical, on the one hand, and anti-utilitarian or anti-futuristic on the other (the futurists had stressed the utilitarian purpose of poetry, developing a sort of *Gebrauchsdichtung* very similar to the utilitarian poetry and music and painting of certain leftist groups, in the West, in recent years), the constructivists are still not anti-aesthetic. Their art tends towards a new kind of naturalism, where the sense is basic, not the sound. One of their chief themes is the part which the intelligentsia has played in the Revolution and in the reconstruction; their poetry is that of socialist reconstruction, seen through the eyes of an intellectual. The theme of Selvinsky's *Kommandarm 2* is "the intellectual in the civil war"; that of his *Push-torg* is "the intellectual in the socialist period of reconstruction"

Setting aside all theory, one yet feels that Selvinsky, in his mature period, is neither lyrical nor poetic in the ordinary sense. His style is very close to the synthetic realism of the new Russian novel; he brings the techniques of prose to poetry, yet writes clear, precise and very original verse. He is primarily a naturalist, madly in love with life; like Zola, he does not hesitate to describe scenes of incredible cruelty, as in his *Ukha-laevischina*. But his love of life, of colors, tastes and pleasures, his passion for things, which he enjoys without ever idealizing them, make him a true poet. And his cultural attitude is defi-

nately Western, comparable only, in the Russia of today, to that of Pasternak (*Uljalaevtshina* contains some witty speculations on modern European art), which prevents Selvinsky from ever appearing uncouth and gives him a sense of measure, one of his most outstanding qualities. This sense, which never abandons him even in his utopian visions of a rationalized and objective world of things—a new world to come—stamps him inevitably as one of the fellow-travelers who see the Revolution and its aftermath with the eyes of an intellectual.

Selvinsky always tends towards large forms; he is no lyrical poet, but he is probably the best of the post-revolutionary poets. His love of composition, of planned purpose, of protocols and development, drives him to attempt larger forms than are customary in contemporary poetry: the novel in verse (*Uljalaevtshina* and *Pushtorg*) or even the tragedy (*Komandarm 2* and *Knight John*). But Selvinsky has not been alone in this task of breaking down the walls of routine and escaping from the withered lyric. Everything of any interest in modern Russian poetry tends towards vaster formal conceptions: Tvardovsky's folkloristic fairy tale, *The Land Muravia*, the poems of Michail Svetlov and Semjen Kirsanov.

Svetlov is the most lyrical and tender of the younger proletarian group, the best of the komsomol poets. He attracted attention with his powerful and extremely melodious serenade, or ballad, *Grenade*. In 1939 he wrote a *Fairy-tale* for the children's theater of Moscow, though written in prose, it is clearly the work of a poet, a real fairy-tale, a dream of a far-off Siberia, so typical of the "frontier-literature" of modern Russia. It is a legend of the undiscovered gold in the East, of the heroic people who "go East" to combat gigantic obstacles. All the char-

acters are heroic and lovable; the poet makes them live and escapes all ridicule by always observing them with tender and clever irony. The songs, between the acts of prose, are exquisitely simple.

Kirsanov is Svetlov's antithesis, not only because he is a fellow-traveler (though only by origin, and though he somehow tries to avoid the typical problems of this group) but also because he is the most talented pupil of Maiakovsky. Kirsanov's major work, until now, is a loud and enthusiastic symphony, *Piatiletka* (1931), on the theme of the Five-year Plan. It is to be hoped that Kirsanov will eventually outgrow Maiakovsky's formalism; if he does not, little of his poetry will survive. He does not possess the tremendous ego of his master, which is still the source of all that yet lives in Maiakovsky's poetry. To an enthusiastic follower of the great poet of the Revolution, the door to reality, which lacks extreme pathos, must remain closed. In *Piatiletka*, Kirsanov draws, with purposefully gigantic brush-strokes, the purely technical reconstruction of Russian economic life, on the whole a very cold world where the trend towards vaster forms is a failure. But Kirsanov is a talented poet whose two collections of verse, *Out of Books* (1934) and *Cape of Good Hope* (1938), contain some good poems, such as *The Bullfight* and *Your Poem*.

In the literature of post-revolutionary Russia, the novel is far more important and significant than poetry. Selvinsky remains on the frontier which separates these two literary forms. All Russian poetry which claims to be more than chamber-music tends away from lyrical form towards something vaster and different, towards folkloristic legend, fairy-tale and fable, towards the epic, the historical drama. The influence and im-

portance of the folkloristic poetry of Russia's many linguistic minorities, whose national literatures have all experienced a great renaissance in the past twenty years are felt in all literature which is written in Russian. The influence of the Caucasus, of Georgian and Armenian literatures, is particularly worthy of study. Yet Russian poetry, on the whole, today presents less formal and intellectual complexity than, say, contemporary American poetry. For the Russian poet, who believes firmly in the new order (the best poets, however, do not necessarily all believe in it), there are fewer problems than for us; and we derive much of our complexity, whether formal, intellectual or emotional, from our inability to solve our problems in any simpler way.

Vera Sandomirsky

R E V I E W S

STORY OF AN ARKANSAS POET

South Star, by John Gould Fletcher. Macmillan.

“WHAT he chiefly objected to, in my verses, was their not infrequent descent into what he called the ‘obvious’”—is the way John Gould Fletcher in his autobiography remembers Ezra Pound’s reaction to his first poetry manuscript thirty years ago in London. Some lines which Pound labeled obvious Fletcher then regarded, and still regards, as among his most successful, and refused to revise. Allowing for unorthodoxies in Pound’s standards of obviousness, and granting that his advice to fellow-poets has not always done them good, readers of

Fletcher, especially in recent years, are bound to regret that he has been so unreceptive to criticism of this sort.

Pound would still be right: obviousness remains central in the inadequacy of Fletcher's expression. It used to be less oppressive when he was allied with the Imagists. Imagism demanded concern with how things were said—though not as complete and focused a concern as Eliot desired—and elicited primarily the descriptive talents of a poet—Fletcher's only undoubted talents. He has always been able to paint scene and ingeniously fit scene to mood.

But in recent lyrics he has become a thoughtful poet, unwilling to stop with depiction of landscapes and people and their effect upon his emotional turns. Every picture must now have commentary, over-explicit in content and wording,—a practice which betrayed so much nineteenth-century verse (my favorite denizen of the resulting chamber of horrors being Wordsworth's "Happy, happy Liver,/With a soul as strong as a mountain river/Pouring out praise to the almighty Giver,/Joy and jollity be with us both!") And Fletcher's increasing didacticism has been accompanied by loss of interest in metrics and language. One wonders what Pound would, or could, say of a poem beginning

To an unfamiliar house once more these feet have wandered,
That set forth on the road so many years gone by.
And once again as stranger have I pondered
On the serene blue depths of an unfamiliar sky.

Eyes opened by such meditative passages, the reader begins to examine the pictorial passages more critically. Even when the subject is attractive, as a whole or in its details, and is sensitively approached, it is buried in banal, verbose, archaic English, in

tired metaphors, in inept rhyming Poetry *could* be made of lines like these.

Close by the door there hung a long lean scythe
Which, ere lawn-mowers came, was oft in play
Round the tree roots when summer heat and dew
Contended in the grass.

More than half of *South Star* is taken up with what Fletcher calls "echoes" of Arkansas and farther South: lyrics about live-oak and dogwood and redhaw and magnolia, fireflies and Ozark thunderstorms, his father's watch and his grandfather's grave. They seem more like echoes of echoes, rarely accomplishing more than vague irritation of the eardrum before dissolving in air

They are preceded, however, by a fifty-page poetic history of Arkansas which makes a definite and sometimes pleasant noise. The first of its four episodes recounts the story of the white discoverer of the state, the sixteenth-century Spaniard, De Soto, who came up the Mississippi hunting gold. It is a kind of small-scale *Conquistador*, picturesque, dramatic, metrically varied, less expansive than is customary with the author. Since he reserves Book IV for a listless lecture about Arkansas facing the future, he has to travel perilously fast in the two intervening books. He displays the French explorers who came down the river with better motives than De Soto's; the robust, lawless early settlers; the creation of the bowie-knife; Colonel Rector's spree to New Orleans with a chartered steamboat; the Civil War; the carpet-baggers—all more excitingly and poetically than does the second volume of the *Britannica*. If he had taken the pains—in planning and in phrasing—with his whole *Story of Arkansas* that he took with Book I, a far different report of it might be made.

Kerker Quinn

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

The Listening Landscape, by Marya Zaturenska Macmillan.

As its title suggests, this is pastoral poetry, and it is so not merely by virtue of the fact that it speaks chiefly of rural scenes and pleasantries, but also because it presupposes a shepherded life, far from the shrilling of train or factory whistles and the scream of air-raid sirens. The security of the young child's world before our era, a world gay with legend and large with myth, the peace of the countryside, the bright seclusion of a painted landscape, the charmed circle built by eighteenth century music, these are the themes which capture Miss Zaturenska's attention and determine the quality of her verse. To dip into her book is to deny Heraclitus's doctrine, and to have the sensation of wading in a backward-flowing stream. It is to escape, not without a haunted sense of grim urgencies left behind, into the "green summer" and the "peacock time" of which she tells us, and which enchant us by their very remoteness.

The poet's ability to take us with her into that delightful country lies largely in her gift of melody. Few of her contemporaries match, and yet fewer excel her in sheer lyricism. By the skillful manipulation of closed and open vowels, the employment of liquid syllables, the clever management of pauses, she conveys the atmosphere of those imaginary gardens. We catch the fragrance of the bloomy fruits, we taste the clear cold waters, we are stroked by the soft airs. She pipes, and we follow, over the hills and far away, delighted by the landscapes through which we pass, by the ease of our motions, by the immense promise of the journey. That promise is not quite fulfilled. Miss Zaturenska is apt to rely upon the purely musical

value of her phrases, and to handle her symbols, like her grammar, imprecisely, with the result that she fails to give us the true measure of the heights and depths towards which she beckons. Occasionally she offers a doubtful confusion of images which defeat rather than support one another. She has, too, a trick of piling up abstractions: "Memory, desire, disaster, love and the aspiring pain," "candor and joy and innocence," "violence and suspense And memory, passion, conflict," "agony, defeat, despair," "warning, premonition and restraint, Acceptance, resignation," "chance, War, ruin, misery," which becomes somewhat irritating. Yet the sense of a charmed tranquility, the feeling that larger views are about to open before us, these remain.

Miss Zaturenska is not unaware of the world from which she is escaping. The mood that governs the book is a nostalgic one. There are recurring symbols of evil, of pain and terror. *The False Summer* is an acknowledgment of the danger of flight into the past, the risk we run when we listen to the siren voice of Amaryllis in the shade: "The angel music from a demon's throat" that draws us "further from home till we stand on the enemy street." *Century of Athletes*, significantly dedicated to Franz Kafka, rehearses the errors and the cruelties of our time, even while it seeks to recall to us those enduring values the time denies. *The Unsepulchred* is a poem about the first World War, written in the lurid light of the second. *Envoy to Aurora* shows us "the guns That speak a harsher language to the sky." It is noteworthy, however, that, with the exception of the first-named, these are the less successful pieces. The classical allusions in the poem addressed to Kafka, for example, have an enfeebling effect, and the last stanza is musical but muddled.

The imagery in *Envoy to Aurora* is unnecessarily ambiguous. In the second stanza the poet says that "the flowers In twisted garlands fall upon the guns" In the fifth stanza she speaks of "angelic voices . . . Whose words are canons hidden among flowers," and the reader, remembering the guns, cannot help wondering whether this is a misprint for "cannons," however right the religious and musical reference seems to be. The best poems are those in which Miss Zaturenska relinquishes herself wholly to "a porcelain world," like that of Hans Christian Andersen, or those in which she glances obliquely toward the iron laws that can shatter its loveliness, without seeking to make too much of her allegory. One of the finest lyrics in the volume is *The Opening Book*, in which the references to the beauties discoverable in the old book of nature are alive and concrete, but those to the evils for which one seeks solace there are large and vague:

Uneasy mind, unloving, trouble-stained,
For you the primitive air so fresh and wild,
Is turned to stormy mist, the light profaned,
The moon peers like a lost and lonely child.

Only the quiet mind, the senses chilled
By grief so old, it has no hope, no need,
Draws strength from nature and is healed, fulfilled,
In meditation are the senses freed.

Then the great page is opened with relief—
Subtle, clear and sharp, each flower is seen,
Exquisite grow the trembling of a leaf,
The silky air, the tree's awakening green,

The grassblade's thin precision, velvet fine,
The dewed thick dusty moss, the flowing look
Of water, hill and sky, their delicate line,
Like newfound lyrics in an ancient book

Such poems as this offer the refreshment they describe, take us into the meadows from which we have been too long exiled,

and leave us, who in a harsh world draw our breath in pain, grateful for their unwonted music, clarity and grace.

Babette Deutsch

DE IMITATIONE

The End of a Decade, by Harry Brown New Directions.

Shadow on the Sun, by Robert Friend. Decker.

The Metaphor in the Jungle, by Parker Tyler. Decker.

In several recent surprise attacks on poetry, critics, publishers, and himself, the writer Harry Brown inadvertently drew attention to the abuse of the word "influence" and to the elementary question of originality. These articles, though only half-serious, offer a convenient explanation of the influences in Brown's own work and in that of Robert Friend; for without in any case distinguishing between true and false imitation they nevertheless approve the idea that something can be assimilated from somebody and reproduced without counterfeiting. There are many young poets whose unnatural fear of having a master is matched by their confusion as to what is and what is not pastiche.

On the whole it is legitimate for poets to imitate what is true of the language in general or experience in general at any given time—poetry progresses through the "discoveries" of certain perspicacious authors of what is new in language and experience—but it is objectionable for the poet to invade the private vocabulary and experience of some one else. Auden, for instance, adopted the aims of Hopkins' versification without taking over the versification itself. An example of false imitation is the same poet's use of assonance, which in his case, however, usually involves a conscious parody.

From Auden Brown appropriates the following "objectionable" practices: (1) the use of an English accent, emphasized by words such as "pram," "cinema," "sir," and idioms and speech mannerisms uncommon to American.

Went up walking in the park, every bench was full,
Went along the ocean like a lonely gull,
Went into the country, the trees were full of song,
But the atmosphere was heavy and I didn't stay long.
Went upon a boat trip, a card was on my berth,
Saying, "Better sever your connection with the earth.
There's no use in standing around
To wait for a wound."

(2) the use of certain words which the English poet has specialized ("creature," "Lear," "animal," "wound") and certain tricks of syntax and grammar, and certain figures of speech which are completely personal.

And I thought, "These creatures are the secure of God.
Safety lies in the actual; the potential and the dream
Are dangerous engines. Only the animals
Are honest and precise, only a man
Would mold ideas and myths into battalions
And, like the giants, war against all Love."

(3) certain forms of prosody which in the original are important habits but which in the copy are no better than affectations. For example, "and" as the rhetorical conjunction. In Auden the use of this connective in the first position in the verse amounts almost to a speech defect. To lisp because the King lisps is very loyal but not very original.

From Berlin to Singapore
Armies wait upon the war,
And old women whisper prayers,
And hyenas leave their lairs.

Otherwise he profits by such general discoveries as (1) the

use of the gory funny ballad and the highbrow blues song and (2) an interest in Ovid. It is not stretching the point to say that Brown recognizes Auden's sanction of the "rediscovery of romantic love."

Though the rivers be flooded and the passes guarded,
And the countries rough and the inhabitants evil,
And grinning death running beside me, and cruel war,
I shall, though it be at the end of earth or heaven,
Come where you are.

In this last group are some individual poems and verses whose standard of excellence is as high as anything published in the last year, and these, *Love Song*, *The Elfin Lover*, *The Appeal*, *Letter to a Lady*, though in the minority, show the unmistakable freedom of expression of the poet on his own.

Shadow on the Sun, by Robert Friend, is more within its rights as original poetry than Brown's work, and yet it is something of a posthumous awakening of the Spender of 1935. It is important that certain poems be written at a certain time and not after—their longevity and their force depends somewhat on the date of birth. (Thus nearly all poems written today about the horror of war are pinchbeck and show a lack of sensitivity about horror.) Friend employs the clipped syntax of our day and the rhetorical question, both general property but both unfortunately identified with Auden and Spender. The word "history," which Auden has battered into a useless abstraction, also appears. "Comfortable in plush, he is not happy," "Let cities fall under the bombs of war," "Did you dream it too: the sleeping tropical island," "the factory overgrown with grass"—these are beliefs and notions which Auden himself has abandoned and repudiated but which nevertheless belong to the poetry of our time.

In a single stanza of Tyler's *The Poet Is Dead* one can discover Browning, Marianne Moore, Terence Heywood, and W. C. Williams:

And so write his history.
Windowed behind him, geometrical,
Is the world he died for: a brilliant detail
Of his vast mystery.
To describe was enough, then terror of
Rejection slips: No to "Who Am I?," yes to "I fail."

—and elsewhere Stein, Pound, Eliot, Lawrence, and Joyce And yet this poet is inventive in the most exciting sense of the word In part this is the result of that disciplined looseness of mind which makes "thought's dictation" possible. In Breton's phrase, Tyler "takes the trouble to PRACTISE poetry," but in so doing he sometimes falls short of producing it. The vice of his technique (and it is still attractive) lies in the mobility of the visual ideas and in the belief that nothing is inorganic. Thus Tyler's words may engage each other in funny or deadly serious maneuvers and here and there, as in Cummings, go completely out of the realm of print. In *The Erotics* we are reminded that language is sometimes at its best seen upside down:

"I take thee" is given grown in a blurring of kiss, ended
In a brick of beauty, severed in a rose of bed: O

Again there is a bit of Cummings' charming baby talk. "We must not be in an Eliot-hurry."

The poem *The Metaphor in The Jungle* celebrates the fact that Tyler exists in a jungle and that

the metaphor
Averts the fang of the poet and
Jubilates and is futile and free . . .

The language being mouthy and swift at the same time gives the impression of mumbling.

Karl J. Shapiro

New Michigan Verse, edited by Carl Edwin Burkland. University of Michigan Press.

Of the 113 pages of this anthology, perhaps a dozen slow one up for a careful look and a re-reading: not a bad average of the incidence of poetry in verse. But if it sounds meager, then let me say that the merit of the book is larger than the total occurrence of what seems to me to be the genuine poetry.

We have, of course, a plague of State and even continental anthologies let loose by publishers whose aim is bulk and consequent author-sale, not quality and representative selection. And now and then some native anthologist prepares a State collection which seeks to gather only verse that names and uses the local scenes: a dull specialty. Mr. Burkland's book has the virtue of a critical standard applied conscientiously to the work of living poets who were born or have lived a good while in Michigan. Even that application of State boundaries to poetry must always be arbitrary treatment, yet justifiable in the interest of locality and regionalism in art so long as a reasonable amount of mature work can be found; and *New Michigan Verse* is a model of its kind.

In little, it is—except for no great preoccupation with social problems—a sample case of modern verse. Almost everywhere the poems are well made, minor reflections of personality and landscape. In the poems of Theodore Roethke this particular skill sometimes reaches the present fashion of the exercise frozen into paralysis. In the work of such conscious artists as David Cornel DeJong, John Malcolm Brinnin and John Nerber there may too be touches of selfconsciousness, but in their poems fresh

intentions work actively upon the poetic forms and make their pages sound with the report of the genuine thing.

W. T. Scott

POETRY ON RECORDS

Robinson Jeffers, Oliver St. John Gogarty, Robert Hillyer, George Barker, John Gould Fletcher, John Holmes, Robert P. Tristram Coffin. Harvard Film Service.

This review is entirely concerned with some of the poets' records which are being issued so abundantly in the Harvard Vociarium series. The batch of seven poets to be considered in this issue includes three Pulitzer Prize winners (Hillyer, Fletcher, Coffin), one man whose adherents have often clamored that the Prize should be his (Jeffers), a "comer" (Holmes), an Englishman and an Irishman now living here (Barker and Gogarty). There is not space to designate which poems appear on which records (these are all 12" discs), but a detailed list is obtainable from the Harvard Film Service, Cambridge, Mass.

Robert Hillyer has a fairly long poetic career to draw from; the poems on his three records range from traditional lyrics and allegory and the semi-humorous lament of the old cow in *Moo* to the mature, grave sonnets of *In Time of Mistrust*, which poetically link the Munich calamity with the coexistent New England storm. Hillyer's readings, disciplined and deliberate, match the technical proficiency of the poems, and the emphatic caesurae illustrate his announced theories: he believes that "all lines in English verse, more than one foot in length, divide into two equal time units," and that a reader "should observe all pauses extravagantly."

George Barker has made a single record of his *Munich Elegy* No. 1 and four of his sonnets. His quiet reading is in contrast to the violent surrealism of his imagery, which is sometimes too tormented but often grimly effective, as in the green horror-images of the sea in the sonnets to the drowned young sailors—sonnets vocally compelling because the toned-down reading has the force of powerful understatement.

John Gould Fletcher's record (Harvard will soon release another by him) presents his poem *Clipper Ships*: the first side is far more effective than the second, which is a generalized and rather novelesque account of ships and men. The first part is better poetically and vocally, as Fletcher's hasty, excited reading suggests the crowded movement of departing ships; Fletcher even breaks into song for the chanteys.

John Holmes's three records offer the work of a young poet stemming from tradition who confronts modern problems in a distinctly modern way. Most of the poems he reads here show the development of a frame of mind—*Address to the Living*, *Map of My Country*, *Evening Meal in the 20th Century* and the others fit together organically; there are excellent lyric passages shot through with thought, and there is a consistent personal strain that is reflected in the unartificial—yet not unrhythmic—urgency of the voice. It is to be hoped that Holmes will also record some of the pleasing light verse from his *Fair Warning*.

The three records by Robinson Jeffers will disappoint some of his followers, for his reading lacks the expected power and range: his voice sounds as if it is bound to a tight throat, as

if it has to battle his jaws to get out. But there is power in some of the readings, though the monotony becomes grating if the records are played consecutively. Jeffers comes down hard on the *r* sounds but surprisingly has no flat-*a* sounds (he says gahs for gas, etc.). One disc is devoted entirely to a long reading from *The Tower Beyond Tragedy*; the other two have various short poems.

Robert P. Tristram Coffin's verse reading has been reviewed here before (October 1940); these five Harvard records make him the "most recorded" of all the self-reading living poets. Coffin is a popular reciter but an unskillful one. In the present series his best work, poetically as well as vocally, deals with concrete objects concretely seen. The simple, clearly presented experiences of *Winter Milking* and *The Cry*, with their sharp, homely New England touches, or a directly realized character like the woman who gives her name to the poem *Roxiney Boody*, are worth a good deal more than all of Coffin's compositional and oral ventures into the fog of philosophy.

Oliver St. John Gogarty has made two records of his light verse. The Irish physician reads with an obvious beat, almost sing-song at times, and with a tendency to soar at the end of a line. There is a suggestion of brogue, there are biting Dublin *r* sounds, and occasionally Buck Mulligan's original stumbles over a syllable. Gogarty's tart epigrams, such as *To Petronius Arbiter* and *To a Boon Companion* are his most pleasing work on the records, together with the longer poem *Leda*, which reveals the mythological heroine as a simple lass who can call the swan nothing but "Goosey, Goosey Gander."

These records are all prepared under the editorship of Pro-

fessor Fred C. Packard, Jr., of Harvard, and other poets in the series will be reviewed in POETRY; the most recent Harvard items are the exciting readings by Robert Speaight, the British star of *Murder in the Cathedral*, who reads Milton, Henry King, Donne, Blake, Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Herbert and Hopkins—and reads them superbly.

Harry Thornton Moore

NEWS NOTES

IN THIS most violent year of the world's history, Rabindranath Tagore appropriately reminds us of himself by dying. He reminds us that his long life was spent in opposition to violence, that he never wavered in diagnosing our vaunted "progress" as an insidious disease. "What is it to me," he said, "that I am fed, clothed and sheltered by a million hands in all the ends of the earth, and informed of the world's news by a million minds? What is it to me that I am speeded around the world in motors and steamers and trains, and through still larger domains in art and talk and books? The point is, do these things magnify life or obliterate it? How shall I live in and through, by and with, above and beyond, all these?"

POETRY has always been very proud of the fact that it published Tagore's poems for the first time in English. This was due to the alertness of Ezra Pound, who forwarded the MSS. from London. The first selection appeared in December of 1912 and was followed by three long groups in subsequent issues. Shortly afterwards came the London edition of *Gitanjali*, with an introduction by W. B. Yeats, and then the award of the Nobel Prize and the magnificent French translations by André Gide. Tagore's poetry was suddenly famous in every land.

Tagore was also one of POETRY's earliest visitors. When the first poems were published, the editors assumed that the poet was in London or India, but no sooner had the issue appeared than they received a letter from Tagore's son, a student in chemistry at the University of Illinois, informing them that his father was his guest in Urbana and would like some copies of the magazine. The editors promptly invited the poet to visit Chicago but when he promptly accepted they found themselves in a predicament. The son and daughter-in-law had become an element in the problem, and POETRY had no fund for entertainment and could not afford the expense of a hotel. As on other occasions,

Mrs. William Vaughn Moody, wife of the poet, came to their rescue. She graciously received the three Hindus in her spacious old South Side mansion and entered into a lasting friendship with the poet during his three or four visits in that winter of 1912-3 Harriet Monroe recalls in her autobiography:

"The Hendersons and I—and others—used to gather around Mrs. Moody's hearth fire, listening to his chanting of his lyrics, or to his talk of Oriental creeds, which made us feel as if we were sitting at the feet of Buddha. His English was more perfect than ours, but we loved best to analyze the formal Bengali rhythms and rhymes as his high tenor voice sang them. And we were interested in his satirical-humorous observations of Western civilization, his surprise over its utter separation of religion from life. He was bitter about the British subjection of his country. 'India has been conquered more than once,' he would say, 'but when the conquest was over life would go on much as before. But this conquest is different; it is like a great steel hammer, crushing persistently the spirit of the people.'

"... [He] questioned the modern organization of society, of the Nation, for selfish ends—for greed, whose weapon is violence. Something in his quiet dignity made our overactivity seem absurd."

We are pleased to hear that Richard Beer-Hofmann, dean of German refugee-writers in America and a great friend of Rilke and Hoffmannsthal, has prepared an edition of his collected poems (in German) for publication in this country through Harcourt, Brace and Company.

A full-length concert of poetry records was given recently at the College of the City of New York, with the voices of fourteen poets reading in the following order: Mark Van Doren, Leonora Speyer, Arthur Davison Ficke, Edgar Lee Masters, Ridgely Torrence, Arthur Guiterman, Genevieve Taggard, W. H. Auden, Robinson Jeffers, Allen Tate, Marianne Moore, Alfred Kreymborg, Richard Aldington and John Hall Wheelock. These records are part of the large Phonographic Library of Contemporary Poets which has been assembled at City College under the direction of Kimball Flaccus and Lyle Winter. A series of similar concerts has been held during the past year in the Harriet Monroe Library at the University of Chicago.

In keeping with the current efforts to further cultural understanding among the nations of the Western Hemisphere, the International Business Machines Corporation, New York City, announces a program of poetry awards. Three prizes will be given in each of the South and Central American countries, the United States, Canada, and Mexico. "There is absolute freedom in the choice of subject," writes Mr. Thomas J. Watson, president of the corporation, "though it is suggested, and

only suggested, that an interesting theme might be found in attempting to express the spirit and aspirations of the poet's native land." A jury of three will be selected in each country by an appropriate authority or organization such as the minister of education or its academy of arts and letters. The amount of the prizes has not as yet been specified.

The John Billings Fiske prize of \$100, given annually at the University of Chicago, has been awarded to Marian Castleman for her poem *The Return*. The judges were Percy H. Boyton, Gladys Campbell, and Judith S. Bond. Miss Castleman has contributed to POETRY as a reviewer.

The Lloyd McKim Garrison Prize at Harvard has been awarded to William Abrahams, one of our recently accepted contributors, for his poem *Self Portrait*.

The Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer prize at Columbia University has been awarded to Ferdinand Helm, Jr., of Schenectady. Mr. Helm is a graduate student and an English instructor in University Extension.

The annual poetry reading contest sponsored by the English Club of the University of Newark for New Jersey high school students was again very successful this year. First three places were taken by Bernadine C. Testa, Victor Brenner Reed, and Marilyn L. Dembeck.

The editors are trying to locate the author of an accepted poem entitled *Pursuit*, beginning "The hunchback on the corner, with gum and shoelaces." The typescript of this poem, containing no name or address, was filed by mistake under the name of another poet, who informed us of the error on receipt of proof. In writing to claim the poem, the author is asked to give some line or phrase in identification, as a precaution against cranks.

We regret a typographical error in the review of *Here Only a Dove*, by Sister Maris Stella, on page 276 of the August issue, where the author's name appeared as "Sister Stella Maris."

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL ENGLE, a native and resident of Iowa, is one of the best-known American poets. He has contributed to POETRY since 1930 and has published four books of poems, *Worn Earth*, *American Song*, *Break the Heart's Anger*, and *Corn*. A new book of his poems will be published this fall. He is a member of the University of Iowa faculty and lives on a farm at Stone City.

EDWIN MUIR, the Scottish poet and critic, has been a frequent contributor to British and American periodicals. Among his books are *Transition* (poems), *The Three Brothers* (novel), *The Structure of*

the Novel, The Story and the Fable (autobiography), etc. He and his wife, Willa Muir, are well known for their translations of Kafka and Feuchtwanger. He lives at St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland.

EVE MERRIAM was born in Philadelphia in 1916, educated at Pennsylvania and Columbia, and now lives in New York City. She has been an advertising copywriter and has contributed to various magazines. She appeared here for the first time in October 1940.

JEREMY INGALLS, a native of Gloucester, Mass., is at present on the staff of Western College, Oxford, Ohio. She has contributed poems to *The New Republic*, *American Prefaces*, etc., and will publish her first book of poems, *The Metaphysical Sword*, in the Yale Series of Younger Poets this fall. Her prose volume, *A Book of Legends*, was recently published by Harcourt, Brace. This is her first appearance.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES, of New York City, contributes often to magazines and is the author of a recent translation of Lorca, *The Poet in New York and Other Poems*. A new book of his poems, *Out of the Jewel*, will be published by Scribner's next spring.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD, one of the most distinguished contemporary poets, is the author of many books of verse and prose and has contributed to *POETRY* since 1920. A new book of her poems, *Long View*, will be published by Harper next spring.

CLIFFORD GESSLER has been a contributor since 1921 and has published several books of poems. He is on the staff of the Oakland, Calif., *Tribune*. His travel book, *Pattern of Mexico*, has just been published by Appleton-Century.

JOSEPHINE JOHNSON, of Norfolk, Va., has published widely in magazines and is the author of a book of poems, *The Unwilling Gypsy*.

NELSON ALGREN, of Chicago, has contributed stories and poems to *The New Republic*, *Story*, *The Southern Review*, *New Masses*, *POETRY*, etc., and is the author of a novel, *Somebody in Boots*. His second novel, *White Hope*, will be published by Harper next spring.

BASIL BUNTING, the English poet, is now serving in the Royal Air Force.

ISRAEL SMITH lives in Jersey Shore, Pa. He has appeared twice before here.

BOB MILLER, a young Arkansas poet, makes his first appearance in this issue. A brochure of his poems was recently issued by the League to Support Poetry.

All but the first of this month's prose contributors have appeared previously.

VERA SANDOMIRSKY was born in Russia and lived there until 1929, when her family moved to Brussels. She escaped last year, six hours before the German invasion of Belgium, and is now living in Chicago. KERKER QUINN is on the English faculty of the University of Illinois.

l is one of the editors of the literary quarterly, *Accent*. BABETTE UTSCH, of New York, is a regular contributor of poems and criticism. r most recent book is *One Part Love*. KARL J. SHAPIRO, the Baltimore poet, is serving in the Army at Camp Lee, Va. HARRY THORN- N MOORE, our critic of records, is now teaching at Northwestern iversity. W. T. SCOTT is on the editorial staff of the Providence, I., *Journal*.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

lected Poems, by John Wheelwright. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.
ems on Several Occasions, by Josephine Miles. New Directions.
Suite for France, by Clark Mills. Introduction by Ivan Goll. James A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.
Book for Priscilla, by Nicholas Moore. The Epsilon Pamphlets, Cambridge, England.
ems from the Fugitive, by Merrill Moore. Priv. ptd., Boston, Mass.
iri, by Marie C. Stopes. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
re for This Watch, by James Franklin Lewis. The Big Mountain Press & Alan Swallow, Albuquerque, N. M.
ols Fable, by Richard Lake. Alan Swallow, Albuquerque.
nnets and Lyrics, by Winthrop Palmer. Falmouth Pub. House, Portland, Me.
ven Letter, by Katherine M. Forkin. Priv. ptd., Menasha, Wis.
ve Circling Beast, by John Hand. Bruce Humphries, Inc.
ar-blown, by Cosette Faust Newton. Kaleidograph Press, Dallas, Tex.
ve Legend of Tucumcari Mountain, by Stu Morrison. Priv. ptd., Tucumcari, N. M.

ANTHOLOGIES, PROSE, AND A TRANSLATION:

be Poetry of Flight, edited by Selden Rodman. Duell, Sloan & Pearce.
ading Poems: An Introduction to Critical Study, by Wright Thomas and Stuart Gerry Brown. Oxford Univ. Press, N. Y. C.
be Journal of Albion Moonlight, by Kenneth Patchen. Published by the author, 81 Bleecker St., New York City
phocles' Oedipus at Colonus, an English Version by Robert Fitzgerald. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

THE SOUTHERN REVIEW

Selections from the Summer Issue:

R. P. BLACKMUR. *Twelve Poets*

RANDALL JARRELL, JOSEPHINE MILES,
C. A. MILLSPAUGH: *Poems*

EUDORA WELTY, PETER TAYLOR,
JOHN ROGERS SHUMAN: *Stories*

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R. W. SHORT: *The Tower beyond Tragedy*
[The poetry of Robinson Jeffers]

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Edited by Cyril Connolly

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